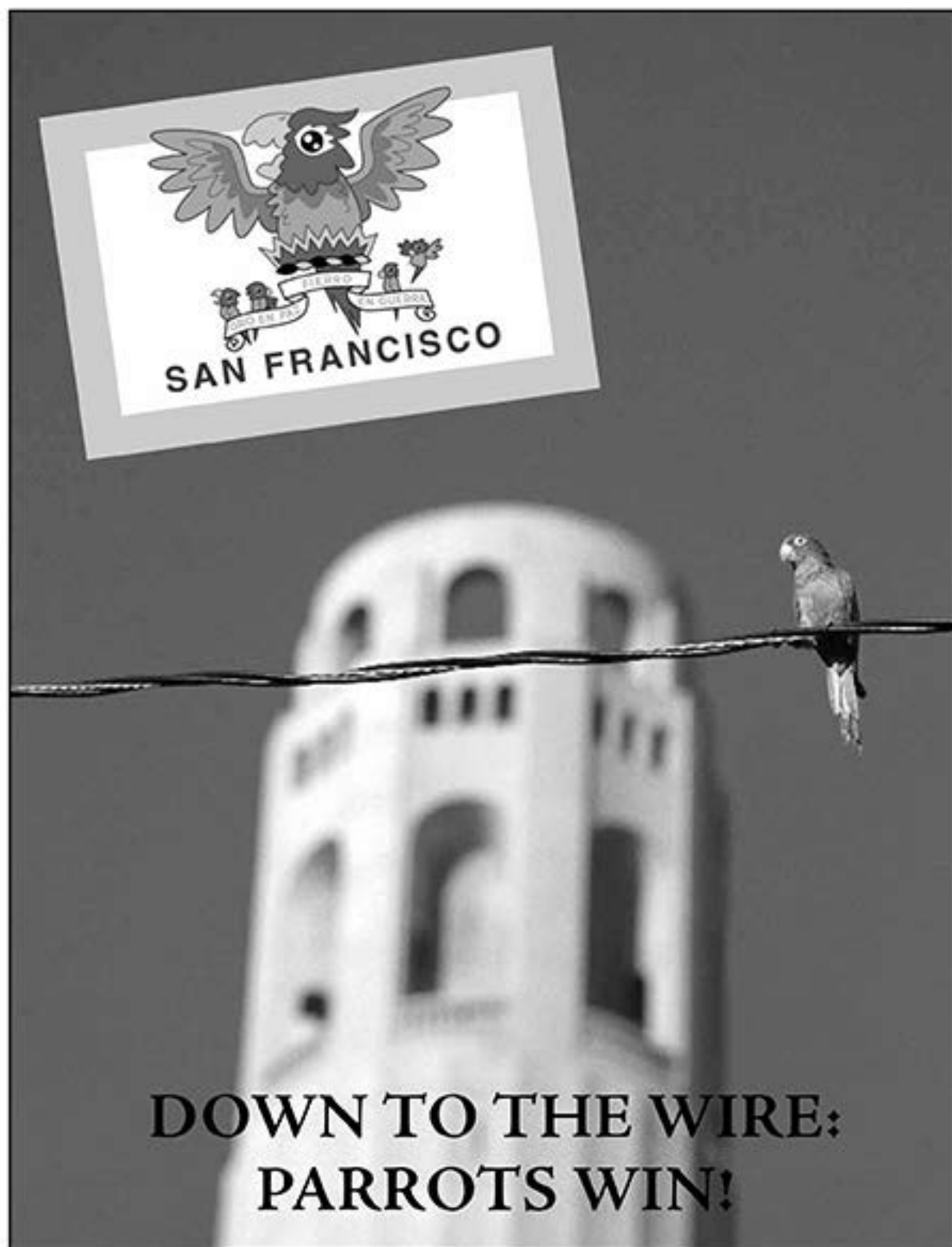


The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 241

Spring 2023



**DOWN TO THE WIRE:
PARROTS WIN!**

KIDS CORNER



by Sarah Kliban
kids@thd.org

Welcome to Kids Corner! THD wants to hear from kids in the neighborhood! If you'd like to ask a question, or you're a kid and want to be interviewed, please contact us at kids@thd.org.



AYO MADDISON, 9

What is the best job in the world?

"Helping to fight global warming because we need to protect our Earth. Learning more about the environment, picking up trash, cleaning out things, so we all have a better life to live. If you see trash, pick it up, and throw it away!!"

If you could choose any animal for a pet, what would you choose?

"A boa. Snakes are really cool. They could hang around your neck. Bring it to school for Show & Tell. I would hang out with it. Give it toys. Feed it rats and stuff. That would be so cool."

Who is the oldest person you know?

"My great uncle. He's 102. He shook my hand. He was a math teacher. I want to live to 108."

What is something you would love to do this summer?

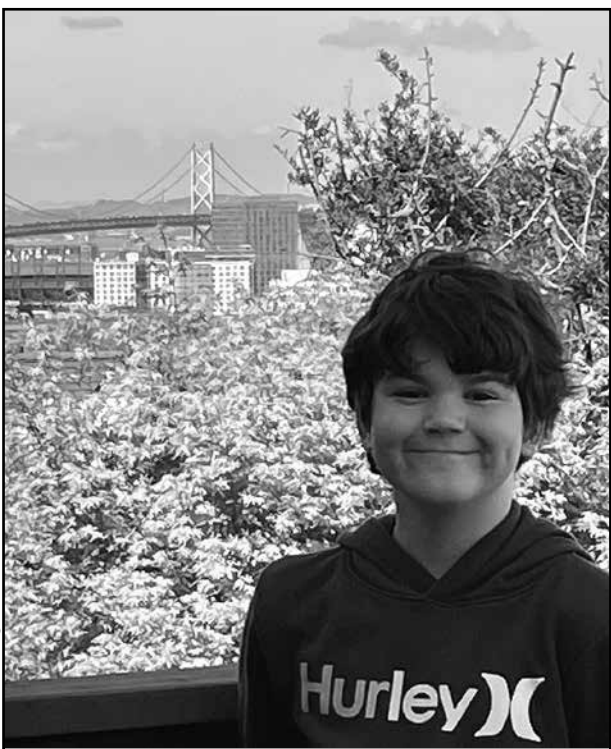
"Going to the Truckee Bike Park in Tahoe. You do tricks and jumps on a bike. I can go off a 7-footer jump. Never broke a bone. In the air is the scariest part. It feels like I'm in slow motion."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"Joe D. It's fun. There's a lot of space, a big blacktop, a big playground. I usually hang out with all my friends there."

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Dwellers!

Go to *thd.org*,
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active community!



SINAN RICHARDS, 10

What is the best job in the world?

"Obviously a taste tester at a fancy restaurant. Food critic—but the only problem with that is you have to write so much. And, of course, probably the owner of a game shop because you get to have all these crazy games."

If you could choose any animal for a pet, what would you choose?

"Either a baby platypus or an echidna. Probably the echidna because they're just downright cute. It's a hedgehog—cute, and a duck, really cute, combined! Or a pig, but not those black boars with gigantic tusks...a small, cute brown one. I'd take it for walks."

Who is the oldest person you know?

"Probably my grandpa. He's 70/80-ish. He mostly just sits around, and he's always laughing. And he loves watching horse races. It's fun to be old because everyone's always talking about how fun retirement is after years of working, probs."

What is something you would love to do this summer?

"Before COVID struck, we were supposed to go to Japan, but it got cancelled. I really want to go there and visit all the main places and all those 10,000 really pretty out-of-the-way cities."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"Dogpatch Games, duh. Next the restaurants: Rintaro, Umi, Absinthe, and The Morris."



VALERIA PADILLA, 9

What is the best job in the world?

"Pediatrician. It's nice to help out kids and helping

them if they're ever injured. It's important to help citizens around the world with their safety and health."

If you could choose any animal for a pet, what would you choose?

"A dog. A dog is really helpful when you feel sad and warms you up when you're sick. They're playful and cute. I used to have a dog but had to give it away when my mom was pregnant."

Who is the oldest person you know?

"My great-grandpa, Abuelo Juan. He's like 90. He's nice and funny."

What is something you would love to do this summer?

"Go to the pool and visit my cousins. Also, go play arcade games. Go outside for walks."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"The Academy of Sciences. It's really interesting. You can see cool things and creatures."



KIERAN TILLMAN, 10

What is the best job in the world?

"A vet. You get to see animals. They're cute. They can cheer you up if you've had a bad day. I have a dog and 3 cats. And a lizard."

If you could choose any animal for a pet, what would you choose?

"Baby alligator. They look cute, and they make cute little noises. I would play with it. Talk to it. Pet it. When it's an adult, you'd have to be a little more careful because they have more aggression when they're hungry."

Who is the oldest person you know?

"My grandma in Phoenix. I think she's 70. She's a painter. She paints a bunch of stuff. Kinda like art."

What is something you would love to do this summer?

"Go to the beach a lot. I like Ocean Beach. But Stinson Beach is better. We just walk around. We collect stuff."

What is your favorite place to hang out in San Francisco?

"The Presidio. Lover's Lane. It's a bridge that has field mice and frogs. The frogs come after the rain. Be really observant because the animals like to hide."



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Al Fuentes
al.fuentes@thd.org

When I wrote my previous column, I was under the impression that it was my last one and that our esteemed new president would be writing this one. However, it turns out I'm on the hook for one more. Because I already did the obligatory farewell and call to arms, this is kind of a one-off anecdote that I'd considered sharing before.

Spoiler alert: This story has a happy ending.

Somewhat late one evening, I decided to take a walk around North Beach and maybe get a beer somewhere. But as soon as I stepped out of my apartment building, I noticed something small and fuzzy on the sidewalk that was moving. Upon closer examination, I realized it was a tiny little bird, unable to either stand or fly. It was periodically twitching, as if it were attempting to right itself and take flight or at least stand up. Its head was stuck in a grotesque position, with one side of its face buried in its shoulder and one eye looking up. I was convinced that it had broken its neck.

I went into a mild panic, at a complete loss as to what to do. I couldn't just leave it there, because it was certain that some predator would come along and eat it. Worse, if that predator happened to be a cat, it would probably torturously play around with the bird before finally killing and perhaps devouring it.

I gently scooped the bird up and laid it on some grass in a planter in front of the building. Given the broken neck, I was convinced that it would surely die soon. It was a cold night, so I held it in my hands, hoping that at least it would die in warmth. Looking back, I wonder if I didn't just scare it with my big, simian paws holding it in captivity.

But it didn't die. It just kept twitching, apparently trying to stand up or get its head straight. I offered my finger, which it held in its feet at first but eventually let go. Once again, I was trying to figure out if I was giving it any comfort or just scaring the hell out of it.

The dilemma here was that I really wanted to save it from a slow, painful death. It became apparent that it was not going to die any time soon. But clearly, it was unable to eat or drink, which led me to worry that it would die

of hunger or thirst. I was at a total loss and starting to get depressed about it. For a moment, it seemed as if the only way to save it from unnecessary suffering was to somehow euthanize it—truly a ghastly thought.

Then it occurred to me to call our own Judy Irving, former president of THD and documentarian who created the beloved film, *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*. Surely, I assumed, if anybody would know what to do with a wounded bird, it would be Judy and her husband Mark Bittner, the subject of that lovely film.

Not surprisingly, Judy and Mark weren't exactly thrilled to get a call from me at 10:30 at night. But when I told them what happened, they were deeply interested. There was some discussion, with Judy on the phone and Mark sharing advice in the background. She finally recommended that I call San Francisco Animal Care and Control, a taxpayer-funded organization that I had never heard of. I asked Judy what I should do if no one was available at that hour, and the silence from the other end was a bit frightening.

The first thing that went right: I could simply dial 311 from my cell phone and get a live person. When I requested Animal Care and Control, the customer service agent asked what it was about, so I said that I had found an injured bird. She transferred my call, and I got sent to voicemail. I described the horrible scene, the condition of the bird, and how it looked like it had a broken neck. After hanging up, I waited anxiously to hear back, which took about 10 minutes. The person who called said my situation was "a top priority," and, after taking my address, instructed me to put it into a box. Someone would come pick it up that night, although an ETA was not available.

I scooped the bird up, brought it into my apartment, and found a small cardboard box. In this kind of a situation, so many strange thoughts come to mind. Should I turn the lights on or off? How do I make sure it gets enough air? What if it somehow gets out of the box? How do I avoid terrifying it while we're waiting? What if it suddenly heals and starts flying around my apartment?

I put the box in a dimly-lit part of the kitchen and waited. I sat silent in a dark room, listening to the occasional twitch and shuffle emanating from within the box, waiting anxiously for the doorbell to ring. Not

A BIRD IN THE HAND



Warbling vireo. © PETER PEARSALL, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

surprisingly, time more or less came to a dead halt. More strange thoughts. Should I make sure it's still ok? How long has it been since I called? If I look at it, will I scare it? If I were inside a giant cardboard box and some giant kept peeking in, I'd get awfully scared.

Finally, after about an hour, I got a call. The people from Animal Care and Control were outside the building, waiting for me. I rushed to pick up the box and bring it out to them. But as I was carrying it out, I looked inside, and, oddly, the bird's neck seemed a bit straighter. It was still an awful sight but clearly better than before.

At the front door, I met two men who looked somewhat like forest rangers. Their clothes were brownish-green, and they had thick leather belts from which hung multiple implements. They looked a bit like police officers without guns.

I handed the box to one of them, a burly guy with a bushy red beard. He looked like the kind of person who could cut down some trees with an axe and build a log cabin out of them. He peered into the box, and I will never forget the expression on his face. It was a look of immense kindness, as if he instantly loved this tiny little bird in his hands, not much bigger than a cotton ball. I spoke with his colleague, who clearly was the administrative member of the duo. He asked a few questions and wrote down a phone number I could call to learn the bird's fate. Throughout the conversation, the burly man with the box kept peeking in, the expression on his face growing ever more gentle, the love of this little bird ever more evident in his eyes. I can't remember the last time I felt so relieved, so grateful for the presence of someone who was kind, educated, and strong.

After a couple days, I called to find out what had become of the bird. They told me it was a species known as a warbling vireo. Later, when I mentioned that to Judy, she said that we don't see many of those here in San Francisco. The bird was fine, and they placed it in a rehabilitation center to monitor it for a few days before releasing it. I never called back to confirm that it was released, but I have no doubt that whatever happened, the bird was treated with kindness and love from people who knew what they were doing.

Over the past two years as president of THD, I've bumped up against a city government that often seems like a beastly, money-burning bureaucracy that can't do anything right. But here was an organization that was as effective as it was humane. It reminds me somewhat of my visits to the S.F. Public Library, those rare moments when I feel like my property taxes are well spent.

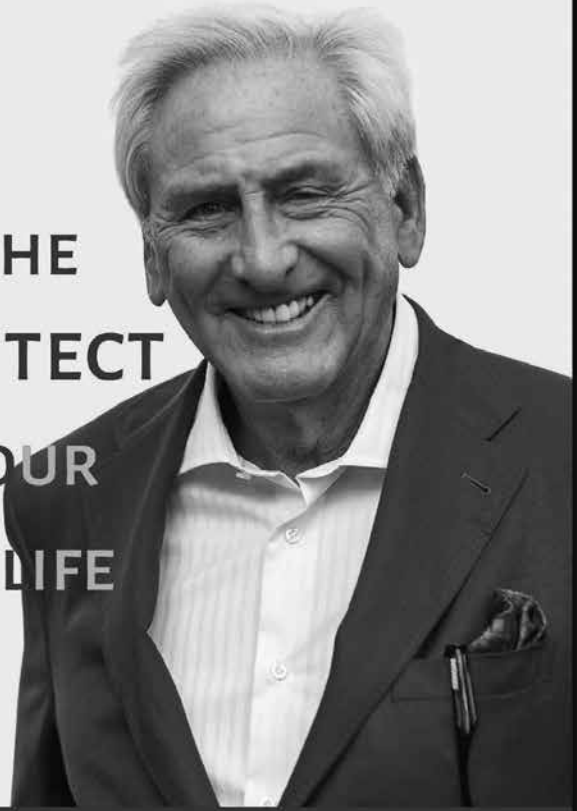
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PETER L. DWARES

WILD PARROTS PREVAIL!

by Judy Irving

San Francisco Chronicle culture critic Peter Hartlaub, co-founder and host of the “Total SF” podcast, and columnist Heather Knight dreamed up a contest to pick the “official animal” of San Francisco, and the wild parrots were in the running. Weekly voting in March narrowed the field from 16 animals to eight, to four, to two finalists, the Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill and the Sea Lions of Pier 39. There were three tall hurdles we had to fly over en route to victory over the sea lions.

1. “But the parrots are non-native!” (complaint from several birders)

Yes, but so are we; like most San Franciscans, the original flock consisted of immigrants from far away. But every wild parrot in the San Francisco flock today was born right here in the city, so they might be “non-native,” but they’re “native born.” Semantics!

2. “But we already have an official city bird!” (complaint from a former city official)

“In the year 2000 when I was Director of the Department of the Environment for San Francisco,” wrote Francesca Viator to the *Chronicle*, “we went through an extensive process to protect and save the California Quail, which was facing several urban threats and if I recall correctly, primarily feral cat predation. One of the efforts to protect the quail included a resolution by the Board of Supervisors, naming the quail as the official City bird (aka animal). I love a good contest and I love the wild parrots, but I don’t like leading anyone astray. If indeed there is a ‘new’ official

animal selected then it should be stated as such, rather than that we don’t have one already.”

Then ensued a series of emails about “bird” vs. “animal,” and whether we could have both. Supervisor Aaron Peskin pointed out that the State of California has both a bird (quail!) and an animal (grizzly bear), and that this was a contest for “animal.” In any case, a bird IS an animal.

Add to that semantic go-round the sad fate of San Francisco’s “official city bird.” I wrote to Francesca:

“Unfortunately, the city has not been kind to the quail. As far as I know they have been extirpated from the city limits, i.e., extinct in SF. There were once quail in Golden Gate Park; none now, thanks to feral cats. There were quail in the Presidio; none now, thanks to misguided attempts to restore habitats: When non-native bushes were removed from the quail’s habitat, they too disappeared. Because the quail are gone now, I feel it’s legitimate to nominate a bird that has adapted well to our city. Francesca, please correct me if I’m wrong, and let us know where quail still reside within the city limits.” Francesca agreed that they were extinct in the city.

I love quail; I made a film about the “Save the Quail” campaign (an Extra on the Wild Parrots DVD), featuring the Presidio quail when they still lived there in the early 2000s. It would be great if quail could make a comeback and thrive along with the parrots.

3. Fishy – unethical? – lobbying by Mayor Breed’s office, which re-tweeted Pier 39’s tweet (“Vote for Sea Lions!”) on the official [sfgov.org](https://twitter.com/sfgov) twitter feed. At the top of her re-tweet was a message from the City of San Francisco: “Gotta love our @sfgov Sea Lions!”

After a THD board member “cried fowl” on Twitter and Supervisor Peskin made a phone call to the Mayor’s office, the tweet was deleted. But it was up on Twitter for several hours. How many people saw it and voted for sea lions before it was removed?

Here’s the tweet before it was taken down. You decide: Election fraud or simple enthusiasm? Political or non-partisan? Unwarranted interference with a free and fair election? :)



Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill.

© STAN TENG

noting later that there’d been a surge of sea lion votes during the hours that the Mayor’s Pier 39 tweet was up.

On the final day of the contest, parrots lagged



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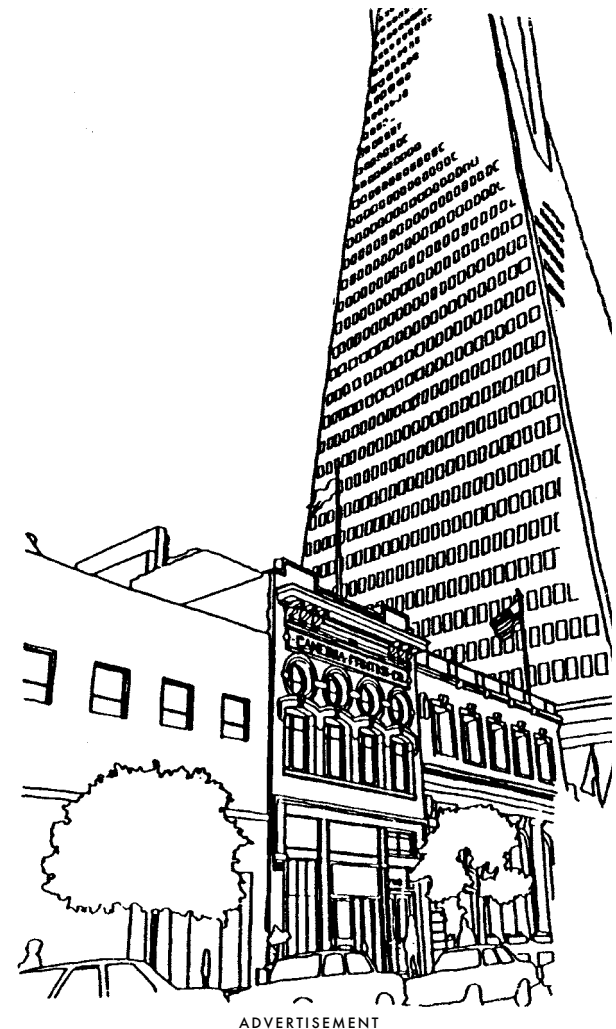
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Gotta love our @sfgov Sea Lions 🐾🐾



PIER 39 @PIER39 · 1h
The Sea Lions have made it to the Finals to be The Official Animal of San Francisco!
In what is a now very close race, every vote counts. Please click the link to visit the @sfchronicle and VOTE SEA LION!
[sfchronicle.com/projects/2023/...](https://sfchronicle.com/projects/2023/)
#sealions #OfficialAnimalSF #TotalSF

Peter Hartlaub commented on the controversy,



Peter Hartlaub @peterhartlaub · Follow

Controversy in the #OfficialAnimalSF voting!

City of S.F. official social media account yesterday tweeted an apparent endorsement for sea lions. Parrot supporters called foul. @sfgov deleted the tweet.

This is all so San Francisco 🐾

#OctoberSurprise 🐾🐾🐾



5:05 PM · Mar 30, 2023

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behind sea lions by 260 votes. Mickaboo, the non-profit bird rescue organization that takes care of sick and injured parrots from our wild flock, went into high gear, posting on TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Telegraph Hill Dwellers, especially newly elected Vice President Greg Giachino, did their part in the last-ditch GOTV effort, and I wrote personal appeals to friends and family via old-fashioned emails. By midnight, when the voting closed, the spunky independent parrots beat the corporate tourism lobby by 227 votes—a classic nail-biter election, 51% to 49%. The battle turned me into a political junkie!

On April 12th, a resolution declaring the wild parrots the official animal of San Francisco was passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors. Later, when the resolution becomes an ordinance, it will be enshrined in law.

Squawk!

The parrots would like to thank the Telegraph Hill Dwellers for all their help, starting in 1999 with the first fundraiser for “The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill” and continuing to this day.





DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

After a long winter of severe storms, a slower-than-anticipated downtown recovery, and sobering budget deficit projections, everyone in my office has been eagerly looking forward to a brighter spring! We have all keenly felt the need for some levity, joy, and simple reminders of why we love San Francisco so much.

To that end, it gave me no small amount of pleasure to welcome my neighbors, the **Wild Parrots of San Francisco**, as the new San Francisco mascot and official animal. The parrots' fierce love of their flock, their resilience against the odds, and the birds' noisy and colorful existence are perfectly synonymous with San Francisco's vibrant and bohemian roots and love of community.

Back-to-Basics Budget Priorities: Safe and Clean

Since my last dispatch, my colleagues saw fit to elect me to my third term as President of the Board of Supervisors, based partly on my previous experience navigating a challenging budget coming out of our last recession and partly on my stated desire to work collaboratively with the Mayor to steer San Francisco's economic recovery.

For the past several years, we have enjoyed budget surpluses due to an infusion of federal or state funds as well as the overperforming returns on our pension funds. Yet new money has led to new programming, and over time, our expenditures have outpaced our revenue. Combine this with the devastating impacts of the pandemic, and our budget deficit is a very real challenge this year. To that end, a robust fiscal restoration of prosperity will require a return to the unglamorous but essential foundations of a healthy city: **safe and clean streets**.

In advance of this year's FY2023/24 budget cycle, we pulled together a supplemental appropriation package that allocated more than **\$25 million to back-fill SFPD overtime** spending as well as expand the popular (albeit expensive) retired SFPD ambassador program. And, after many months of negotiation, San Francisco has come to an agreement with the SF Police Officers Association to approve 10.75% pay raises over three years, making San Francisco the Bay Area city with the highest base wage for entry level officers. All of this investment in SFPD comes on top of a \$50 million increase to the police budget that the Board of Supervisors approved in last year's budget (the largest year-over-year increase of any other Department), firmly cementing the Board's commitment to investing in a SF Police Force that we expect to see in our

neighborhoods prioritizing public safety. I continue to have nothing but the highest praise for Captain Doug Farmer, who has been responsive, strategic, and deeply committed to community building in his work at Central Station.

Additionally, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved my **\$25 million cleaning supplemental appropriation** to give the Department of Public Works (DPW) a desperately needed infusion of resources for hiring street cleaners and acquiring equipment. The package includes a power-washing machine for every district that will help target critical sidewalk and alleyway cleaning as well as expand graffiti abatement to tackle the scourge of graffiti that has gotten out of control since the pandemic began. The staffing will include new intensive cleaning teams in the most challenging neighborhoods, including the Greater Tenderloin, Chinatown, and the Mission.

DPW has continued its successful **Clean Corridor Crew** program, which deploys a contingent of power-washers, flusher trucks, litter removers, graffiti abatement officers, and outreach inspectors to clean the streets, sidewalks, and public street furniture along key commercial corridors, while also educating residents and merchants about maintenance requirements. You might have caught these crews on Columbus Avenue from Washington to Lombard Streets a few months back. Check out the program's website, <https://sfpublicworks.org/cleancorridorssf>, to see where they will be focused.

We have also been working with DPW to reallocate funding to sidewalk widening on Grant Avenue and Green Street, two popular Shared Spaces hubs that would benefit from permanent infrastructure investment in outdoor use for our thriving small businesses. Finally, we have been working hard with DPW on the **Lombard Irrigation Project**, restoring the vegetation and beautification elements that have made the crooked street an iconic tourist destination for generations.

Reimagining Downtown

For the past six months, I've been convening a brain trust of stakeholders, ranging from office building owners, business leaders, architects, arts and culture advocates, and tourism and travel representatives to identify a short list of economic recovery priorities that are actionable.

I have taken to using my friend's quip: "There is no silver bullet, but perhaps we can get some silver buckshot." Right out of the gate, I have partnered with the Mayor to combine our two versions of a Downtown Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, now making its way through the legislative process. It would incentivize the conversion of office space to everything from live/

work studios and residential housing to light industrial creative spaces in the Financial District, Union Square, Mid-Market corridor, and Northeast Waterfront.

Next up is an Enterprise Zone to help small businesses, as well as a streamlined all-in-one permit for block party and street activation that CBDs like the Downtown Partnership and the Union Square Alliance could use quickly and efficiently to program the public realm space, which includes streets, sidewalks, plazas, and alleyways. My 2019 legislation to fund open space and street beautification in our Downtown public realm has generated fees to build out alleys with public seating and a new stage for Union Square performances.

Finally, I continue to work with the developers behind the rehabilitation and reimagining of the Transamerica Pyramid into an arts hub and focal point at the border of the Financial District and North Beach.

We Heart North Beach Small Businesses!

Despite the weather, the entire neighborhood was out to celebrate the long-awaited March opening of a full-service grocery at 580 Green Street, **Luke's Local**. To give you an idea of how long our office has doggedly pursued recruiting a tenant for this location, I found an email from my Chief of Staff trying to pull together a proposal after a walkthrough of the building in 2019! We're thrilled to have Luke Oppenheim and his team activating this space. We are particularly thrilled since in a neighborhood survey conducted by Telegraph Hill Dwellers and North Beach Business Association, a grocery was second only to a hardware store in the community's wish list of potential small businesses.

In April, we celebrated **Caffe Greco** becoming a Legacy Business and **Caffe Trieste** turning 67 years young. The newly reopened **Savoy Tivoli** played host to a Wild Parrots victory party, and April's **National Poetry Month** meant a continuous celebration of **City Lights** and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. We recently renamed the block of Commercial Alley between Kearny and Montgomery Streets after former resident and SF royalty, Emperor Norton. Stay tuned for a special celebration honoring this quirky icon at a future date!

North Beach First Fridays continue to keep the neighborhood bustling, and a recent article in *The San Francisco Standard* showcased how we worked together with careful intention to bring North Beach back from the pandemic. I'm proud that we enjoy one of the best neighborhood commercial corridor occupancy rates in the City and that North Beach continues to be a vibrant village that is a bright spot during the City's recovery for tourists and locals alike.

See you in the neighborhood,
Aaron



Advertise in The Semaphore.

See page 19.

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AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT

by George Schumm

The latest addition to Telegraph Hill’s ridgeline can be spied from the southwest quadrant of Washington Square Park, about 40 degrees to the left of Coit Tower. And if you trek up the south side of Greenwich Street toward Grant Avenue, stop at the third tree from the corner, then look across the street and up to the roof deck, you’ll see her big as life—a large weathervane depicting Fortuna, the Roman goddess of chance, luck, and fate. At night, from 8 to 9 p.m., she’s thoughtfully bathed in light.

Most know her today as Lady Justice holding the scales, a modern take on the Italian adage “*La dea della fortuna è cieca*.” (“The luck goddess is blind.”). (Historically, Fortuna was sometimes rendered blindfolded but never with a balance.) This version, by contrast, is a svelte nude holding before her a sail to catch the wind.

The piece was erected there in February of this year by Phil Williams, a retired hydrologist. It replaces a custom built, fully functional *camera obscura* that once sat in the same spot and can now be enjoyed at the Exploratorium. The vane’s genesis lies in a trip to Venice by Phil and his wife, Patricia, when he became fascinated with a weathervane sitting atop the Dogana di Mare, a 17th century customs house on the Grand Canal. That instrument was designed by the Italian-Swiss baroque sculptor Bernardo Falcone and has been in place, serving merchants and mariners, since 1678.

Having fallen in love with the concept, Phil enlist-



Fortuna before the storm.

© DAVID LIPKIN

ed friend and Petaluma sculptor Thomas Sipes to produce a six-foot replica. It’s fashioned out of a store mannequin (sourced from the Mannequin Madness

warehouse in Oakland), steel frame, and fiberglass skin, mounted on the axle of a junked trailer and painted a weathered bronze to mimic the original.

For Phil, an English transplant, Fortuna was conceived as a gift to his adopted home—a shot-in-the-collective-arm, if you will, for a city in recovery from the trauma of the past few years.

He sees her speaking to a hubris of our age. There’s a tendency, too often today, to divide the world into winners and losers, makers and takers. Those on top pride themselves on their “genius,” while those on the bottom have no one but themselves to blame. Blind this is to the capriciousness of life, the extent to which “fortune”—the dumb luck of time, place, and accidents of birth—plays a role in one’s lot. “Fortuna is telling us,” Phil says, “which way the winds of fate are blowing.”

Fortuna, *benvenuta*, welcome to the Hill!

(Just as I penned the above and hit “SAVE,” news came that the winds of fate, this time in the form of a record-setting “bomb cyclone” sneaking up from Monterey Bay, had taken its toll on the vane. She was severely bent, cracked at the waist, and with a severed foot. But unlike the semaphore station that gave Telegraph Hill its name, blown down in a winter storm, never to be rebuilt, Fortuna, with any luck and good as new, should be back in place by the time you read this.)



Fortuna after the storm.

© PHIL WILLIAMS



Tracing the winds of fate.

© DAVID LIPKIN



Fortuna with Phil Williams, before heading to repairs.

© JUDY IRVING



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FROM THE EDITOR

by Cap Caplan
semaphore@thd.org

Stand for a moment across the street from 580 Green Street, formerly the site of Citibank. The large arched windows shining back are engaging, drawing one in.

Then cross the street and step into Luke's Local, the third iteration of the grocery and deli, opened in March. Each person crossing the threshold probably experiences something different. For me, and I've been there three times this month, it's the glorious light and airiness, the openness of the space, and the upbeat atmosphere one immediately encounters.

Judy Irving and I had the opportunity to talk with founder and CEO Luke Oppenheim, 40, from his home in Maine where he was on paternity leave, he and his wife Jaymie and two-year-old big brother Charlie having welcomed baby Billy. Perusing the store's website before our conversation, I learned that Luke at age six started The Snow Day Cafe, cooking breakfast for his family on days school was closed. Three years later, he had earned the moniker "Bagel Boy" for baking four dozen bagels regularly for the local grocery.

We asked about the thinking behind Luke's Local. How did Luke, who grew up in Maine, come to open a grocery store in San Francisco?

Laughing, Luke told us his foray into food was a bit backwards, starting in the delivery business and then moving into the grocery—the products—second, though one of his employees suggested to me that his real start was selling burritos at a Bart station.

Visiting his brother in Petaluma, Luke was enamored by the weather, access to the outdoors, and the openness of the people he encountered. He moved to San Francisco uncertain of his career path but knowing, even when in college, that what was important to him was the human connection. He wanted to interact with people each day and create a depth of experience with them.

Luke's aim from the beginning has been to transform the dynamic of the somewhat begrudged shopping trip into an opportunity to engage with the community, to experience a sense of neighborliness. By the time you are reading this, dry weather might finally allow the placement of tables and chairs for sipping coffee and enjoying a sandwich or meal with neighbors along the long stretch of sidewalk outside.

The grocery brings not just a special selection of products but a specific set of principles and values underpinning the business. To understand how he came to them, you need to know that he is the son of Tom and Kate Chapelle, founders of the renowned Tom's of Maine, creators of the first natural toothpaste, with the motto "helping you live a naturally healthy life is our passion."

With that modeling, arose the foundation of Luke's Local.

♦ Integrity: carefully sourcing products with an emphasis on local purveyors



Luke with wife Jaymie and son Charlie. COURTESY LUKE OPPENHEIM

HELPING BUSY PEOPLE EAT WELL

♦ Environmental Stewardship: maintaining a healthy planet through organic and sustainable farming practices

♦ Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: supporting BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, women, and other under-represented groups so all in the company and community can experience nourishment, joy, and connection

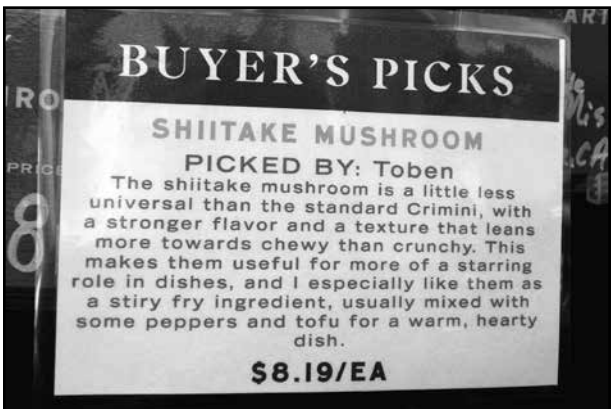
♦ Transparency: from sourcing to company culture, to financial reporting, displaying openness, honesty, and straightforwardness.

Regarding the last value, Entrepreneurial Spirit, Luke noted that "We've become more intentional in promoting from within," in explaining an unusual mentorship initiative as part of the company's career development program.

"The goal of the Career Development Program is to create an environment that enables an equitable workplace by giving all interested Luke's Local employees the opportunity to achieve leadership roles. At the moment, it's a small program that involves four mentors covering different aspects of our business, from marketing and design to finance to language skills. We hope in time we can invest in it more and grow the number of mentees/mentors per year. Employees interested in moving up the management path engage one-on-one with a mentor manager for two semesters. For others, there are language skills classes, among others."

Products

Walking up and down the aisles, I was struck by the boxes and cans of unusual products, many with unfamiliar names and contents inviting consumption: Chosen Foods Avocado Oil, Chloe's Dark Chocolate or Coconut Pops. Small signs labeled "Buyer's Picks" offered a staff member's name and explanation for the recommendation.

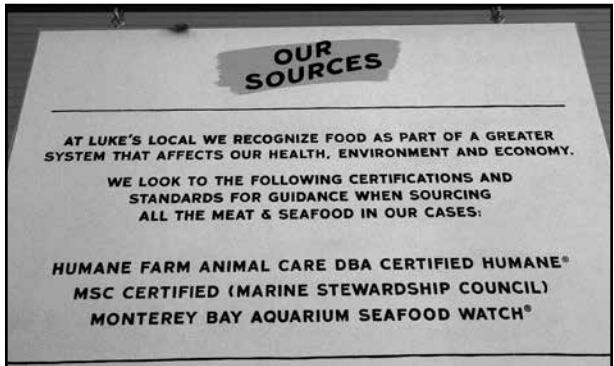


© JUDY IRVING

One row offers a dog and cat paradise. There are amazing combinations: for cats, Ocean Whitefish and Potato and for dogs, Salmon and Sweet Potato, Chicken and Brown Rice, to name but a few. And dog biscuits, Human Grade Organic Cookie Pal and Pumpkin and Chia. A shopper perusing the aisle with

me whispered that he'd like to try some himself. I'm sure my basset hound Ace, known to readers, would be an enthusiastic taste tester.

Over the meat and seafood counter a sign opera-



© JUDY IRVING

tionalizes more of Luke Oppenheim's philosophy.

I learned that the meat and seafood are prepared right there. Butchers cut the meat, including grinding the beef. A customer standing next to me extolled the steak he had eaten the night before, noting it was on sale.

In fact, sale signs appear frequently over the products—boxed and canned goods, frozen items, cleaning supplies, and wine, for example.

Prepared Food

Determined to give Luke's offerings a sampling rather than just write about them, I carried home "Herb Roasted Catch of the Day," matzo ball soup, chicken pot pie, and produce: cucumbers, broccoli, apples, oranges, and sweet cherry tomatoes. Though I haven't gotten to the soup or the pot pie yet (tonight), the braised cod fish was seasoned perfectly.

I could have selected instead from among 10 sandwiches, ready-to-go in the deli case or made to order exactly to one's liking, all sounding delectable. How about "Trippy Turkey" (sliced rye, roasted turkey, bacon, sprouts, pepperoncini, dijon mustard, garlic mayo, cheddar cheese, and tomato) or "California Ban Mi" (French roll, pork/chicken/tofu, bomba mayo, avocado, pickled carrots, jalapeno, cilantro, and cucumber)?

All of Luke's prepared foods and many of its "Luke's Local" products on the shelves and in the refrigerator and freezer cases are made at Luke's Local Commissary Kitchen in the Dogpatch. A full team of chefs works in the "Fox Den" to prepare fresh meals and snacks every day. Staff suggestions frequently result in a new product like "Luke's Tomato Sauce with Olives and Capers."

The fox symbol appears as a logo on many signs and in program titles. Luke explained that he was "inspired by the alchemy fox, the cultivator of the elixirs of life and also picked because foxes are fast, and we were delivery only at the time."



New customers at the soft opening.

© DAVID LIPKIN



Luke's Local next to Caffe Sport.

© JUDY IRVING

Delivery

I could have chosen “Same Day Delivery,” an important offering. One can shop in the store or download an app to shop online, promising regular groceries as well as meat and seafood and “restaurant quality meals.” The fee is \$5.99 but free on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Fox Club

Fox Club is a 1:1 loyalty program for customers offering one point for every dollar spent at the grocery.

At a certain number of points, customers can redeem those for cash.

But it's more than that. Customers can choose instead to donate the money to a nonprofit selected by the staff quarterly. A sign beginning “Current Quarter's Fox Club Partners Q2 2023” lists the current four—A Meal with Dignity, The Farmlink Project, Grattan Elementary, and the Haight Ashbury Food Program—with a description of each. Luke's Local is a prime contributor during the period.

Grounds to Ground

Grounds to Ground is a coffee donation program started in 2022. In partnership with Garden for the Environment, the coffee grounds from a Luke's Local coffee kiosk (soon to come to the North Beach location) are donated to the garden for use in its compost system. In a three-week period at the start of the program, Luke's Local donated 153.7 pounds from its Cole Valley and Cow Hollow groceries.

A wonderful addition to our neighborhood. Welcome, Luke's Local!





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PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Michael Rothmann, Committee Chair
mike.rothmann@thd.org

This winter has certainly been one to remember. Over the past few months, our fair city has been slammed with a series of rainstorms, atmospheric rivers, and a bomb cyclone capable of producing hurricane-force winds. The result has been carnage on our roads and hillsides and extensive damage to our City's street trees. Hundreds of trees around San Francisco have come down, including the recent loss of one of the iconic Lombardy Poplars at the center of Washington Square Park. The weather has caused much property damage and, in some cases, bodily harm.

In the face of these extreme weather events, there are two ways we might proceed as a city. Recent losses and damage from falling trees might convince the public that trees are dangerous and make a mess, encouraging everyone to abandon the idea of an urban forest. Alternatively, we could double down on our forestry goals, increase plantings while choosing to replace fallen trees with other species that are hardier in stormy weather, more suitable to urban environments, and recommit to building a greener and more climate resilient city.

Choosing the latter course, the President of THD, Al Fontes, and representatives of 23 community groups from across San Francisco have signed a proposed resolution calling for a moratorium on the removal of any nonhazardous street trees.

The resolution was drafted by Josh Klipp, a community coordinator at Mission Verde, an organization responsible for watering more than 100 street trees in

AMIDST STORMS, THD SIGNS RESOLUTION TO HALT NON-ESSENTIAL TREE REMOVALS

the Mission District. In it, Klipp emphasizes the City's need to mitigate recent losses, a consequence of this winter's storms, as well as San Francisco's recent inability to adhere to its own Urban Forestry and Climate Action Plans due to insufficient tree-forward laws, policies, and funding sources, specifically for planting and watering. He presents the following, many of which have been discussed in previous Parks & Trees Reports, as an additional line of reasoning to enact this moratorium,

- 2014 Urban Forest Plan called for the addition of 50,000-net new street trees by 2034.
- In 2017, after Proposition E changed responsibility for street tree maintenance and planting from property owners to the City, San Francisco conducted a Street Tree Census, establishing a baseline as a starting point for forestry goals.
- From the 2022 Urban Forest Report: "Between FY18 and FY22, 10,197 new street trees were planted and 11,460 removed, a 1,263 tree decrease since the 2017 street tree census."

By signing this moratorium, THD, along with the other community groups, has sent a message to our officials that growing San Francisco's urban canopy is a goal that needs to be taken more seriously. The introduction of a newly proposed municipal tree nursery project under the freeway on 5th Street is a helpful step but not nearly enough to address this crisis. This resolution makes clear that without a greater commitment to canopy growth from the Urban Forestry Council and our policy makers in the form of the adoption of laws and resolutions such as this one—as well as



A downed Lombardy poplar in Washington Square Park, a casualty of the recent storms. © MICHAEL ROTHMANN

a dedicated funding source in the budget for planting and watering—it will continue to be a struggle to keep our streets green and shaded. ✂



WATERFRONT REPORT

by Greg Chiampou, Committee Chair
greg.chiampou@thd.org

In the last issue, we discussed the Port's seven alternative strategies for combating seismic and sea level rise risks to our waterfront. Separately, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) plans to release, in December, its own evaluation and recommendations for protecting the Bay Area's waterfront, including the Port's 7.5-mile waterfront as well as SFO's operations. That pending USACE report will be subject to multi-level approvals at the federal level. The federal government is expected to fund up to 65% of the City's future waterfront remediation/adaptations efforts; hence, its recommendations and support are vital to the Port's own adaptations efforts.

Although the Port's draft Adaptations Plan does not include cost estimates (or funding expectations) for its seven alternative remediation strategies, Port Director Elaine Forbes has speculated that the range could be \$10-\$20 billion. USACE invited THD to consult regarding the effects of such flooding on historic properties and ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects.

Ferry Building

The Committee took a walking tour of the Port's newly proposed alterations to the building's interior and exterior (Figure 1). The entire northern arcade (Figure 2), currently a public walkway with several din-

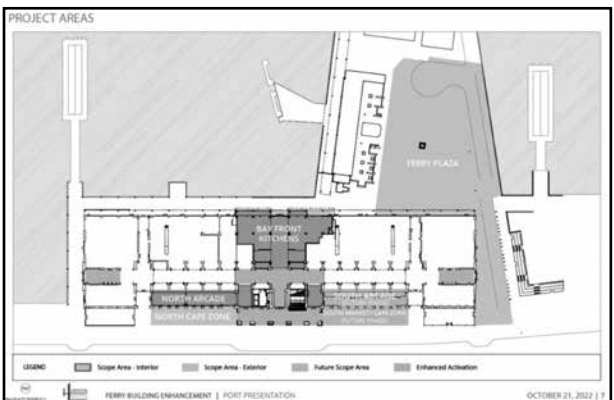


Figure 1. Ferry Building—proposed project areas.

SAN FRANCISCO PORT'S ADAPTATIONS STRATEGIES

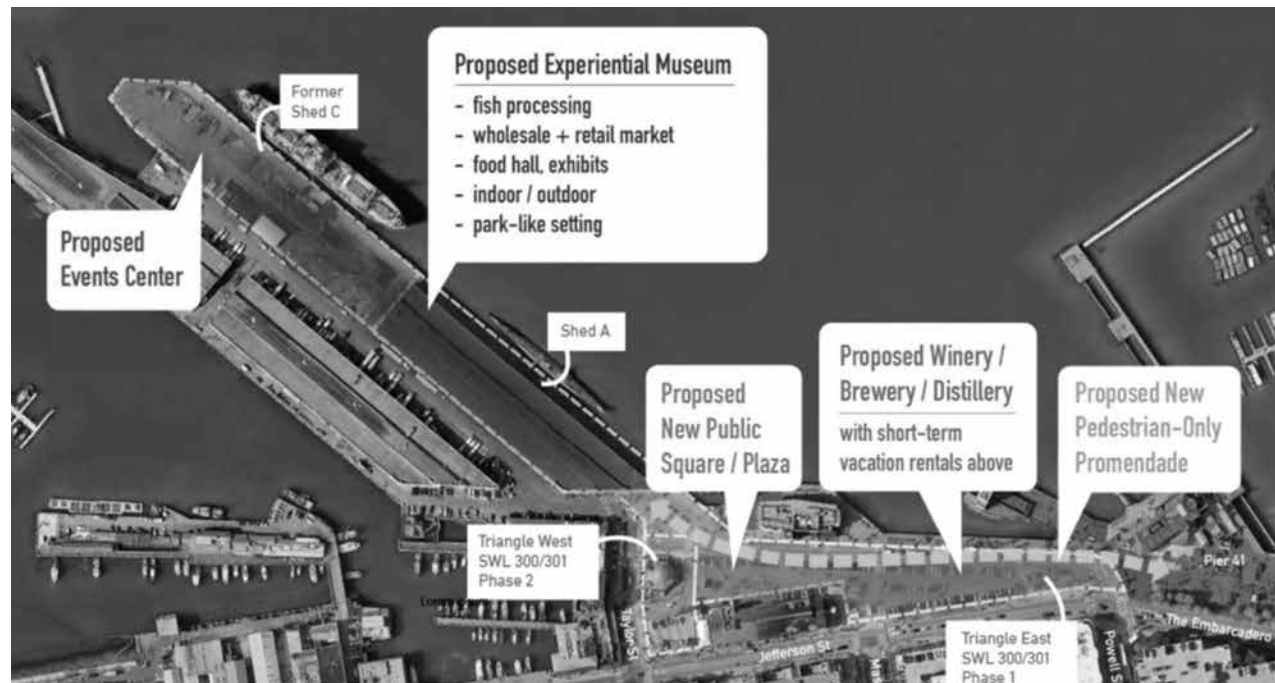


Figure 3. Fisherman's Wharf—unsolicited development proposal.

ing establishments, would be repurposed for additional dining businesses, including awnings and heaters, plus newly opened walkway access to the interior for kitchen operations. Other proposed changes address the rear plaza area, the interior east/west corridor located under the clock, and the building's eastern waterfront. Initial Waterfront Committee concerns center on the proposal's multiple infringements on public space and access.

Fisherman's Wharf/Pier 45 (Lots A and C)

In March, the Port held community meetings to review a recent unsolicited proposal by Fisherman's Wharf Revitalized LLC (developers), to convert some of the existing parking lot and Pier 45 (at Taylor and Beach Streets) into an entertainment and lodging complex (Figure 3), with exhibition areas, a seafood market, a craft wine/beer cafe, and an extended stay resort (similar to Airbnb). The developers stated that they appreciated that Proposition H (which restricts hotels on the City's waterfront) has bearing but were not yet prepared to address that issue at this phase of their proposal. The Wharf's fishing community mem-

bers expressed objections to proposed reductions in maritime storage space, among other concerns. ✂



Figure 2. Ferry Building—proposed North Arcade and Cafe area.



NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT REPORT

by Nick Ferris, Committee Chair
nick.ferris@thd.org

With the rain behind us and COVID seemingly in the rearview mirror, Neighborhood Engagement’s calendar is quickly filling. This report will give a brief outline of events happening in the coming months. Some are social, while others, civic. Some activities will take place in person, others held virtually. They are all focused on neighborhood issues, with an eye to promoting community involvement.

May is Affordable Housing Month, and we’ll be hosting an in-person panel on the relationship between housing and labor in San Francisco. Why does a single unit of affordable housing in San Francisco cost more than \$1 million to build? How can we sustain a housing market that is truly available at all income levels? What can we do to ensure the diversity of our neighborhoods, so people who work in our communities might also live here? How can individuals and families remain in the communities in which they grew up?

These are just some of the questions we’ll discuss, with panelists providing a general history of how we reached the current intolerable situation. At the time of writing, three people have confirmed their participation.


John Avalos, former Supervisor and current Executive Director of the Council of Community Housing Organizations, is one of San Francisco’s leading housing experts, with 25 years of experience (in and out of office) building coalitions to develop public policy, pass people-oriented budgets, support tenants, and design successful revenue measures to build affordable housing in San Francisco.

Alex Lantsberg, Director of Research and Advocacy for the San Francisco Electrical Construction Industry, will also be a panelist. Mr. Lantsberg leads policy research and legislative advocacy for the electrical union



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Photos from recent Third Thursday Neighborhood Happy Hour.

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and sits on the San Francisco Housing Stability Fund Oversight Board.

Shanti Singh, Legislative Director of Tenants Together, will be a third member. Ms. Singh left the tech industry to work full-time in tenants’ rights after organizing with renters in private, public, and nonprofit housing, alongside housing justice groups in San Francisco. She’s chair of the SF Housing Stability Oversight Board, a City Commissioner for clean municipal energy, and a board member of the San Francisco Community Land Trust.

This event will be held during the week of May 15. Be on the lookout for an email from THD confirming the exact date and time to be hosted at Petite Lil’s, 1707 Powell Street.

June will be dedicated to public safety, as it’s a concern for many, becoming a unifying issue across our district’s neighborhood organizations. Violent crimes have generally decreased over the past five, ten, and 15 years; yet many people say they feel less safe today. Why is that and what’s causing it? How can we as a neighborhood and City do more to keep our streets safe? If public safety is an important issue for you, please join our planning committee.

In July, we’ll host a government accountability forum that will look at how we hold our elected officials to account. What metrics provide a benchmark against which to measure their performance? Is there transparency? Many people have strong reactions about our Mayor London Breed’s tenure, but surely, we should be able to consider objectively if she is doing a good or poor job against the needs of our City. Are our elected representatives succeeding in the areas on which they campaigned? These are some of the questions we’ll

ask, predicated in a belief that we should have greater transparency on performance metrics to see how our leaders are doing.

Our Third Thursday Neighborhood Happy Hour and First Fridays Art Walk have proven quite successful, and I encourage you to attend. THD’s happy hour event takes place on the third Thursday of every month (coming up: May 18, June 15, and July 20) at 5:30 p.m. at the newly reopened Savoy Tivoli, 1434 Grant Avenue. Come by to meet your neighbors, and learn what’s happening around the community.

Our First Fridays Art Walks are next scheduled for May 5, June 2, and July 7. Attendees meet at Caffè Trieste (601 Vallejo Street) at 5:30 p.m. As a group, we take a stroll through the evening’s open galleries and small businesses. As always, we’ll be sending emails and posting on our social channels to remind you.

Thanks for reading, and if you’d like to join our growing committee, please reach out at nick.ferris@thd.org. There’s no shortage of meaningful and fun ways to get involved in our neighborhood.





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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE THD 2023-2024 BOARD!

Congratulations to the Officers and Directors who were elected to the THD Board at the Annual Meeting on April 11, 2023.

Officers

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Corresponding Secretary

Treasurer

Financial Secretary

Historian

Past President

Semaphore Editor
- Stan Hayes

Greg Giachino

Mary Lipian

Katie Hopkins

Nick Ferris

Andy Katz

Nancy Shanahan

Al Fontes

Cap Caplan

Directors 2022-2024 (Unexpired Terms)

- Theresa Flandrich

Nanci Gaglio

Michael Rothmann

Nadya Williams

Directors 2023-2025

- * Greta Alexander

Kristen Foley

* Fran Schreiber

* Peter Stevens

* New Board Members



PETER STEVENS

Ever since I moved to San Francisco, I have been drawn to North Beach. Initially it was by the music and poetry, but I quickly learned that this neighborhood has so much more. North Beach is full of rich and culturally diverse stories from immigrants, the LGBTQ community, and the Beatniks, to name a few of many. These stories are the soul of the neighborhood and are embedded in the streets we walk, the buildings we inhabit, the trees we plant, the food we eat, and the community we build.

I was fortunate to be able to move to North Beach two years ago, and I would like to contribute to the preservation and the continuation of our North Beach story. I have a JD from UC Hastings and experience in land use and community organizing. I hope to share my knowledge in both areas, helping to advocate for the neighborhood and bring more neighbors into our organization.



FRAN SCHREIBER

Since 1976, I've lived on the quiet backside of Telegraph Hill, looking out at the Bay Bridge, our historical warehouses, and the parrots in the greenery across Vallejo Street. I immediately joined THD and now, having retired, am able to pursue my interest in preserving our historic neighborhood.

I also serve as Secretary-Treasurer of the Working America Education Fund (WA), a nonprofit. WA, with more than four million members across the country, is the community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, uniting working people who don't have a union on the job. From its start in 2003, WA has fought nationally and at state and local levels for good jobs, a fair economy, and a democracy that represents all of us.

I am a retired attorney who provided *pro bono* services to workers and unions, focusing on worker health and safety. My daughter Rachael and son-in-law Blake and two darling grandchildren, Rose and Renzo, live close by in San Francisco.



GRETA ALEXANDER

North Beach has been my spiritual home since arriving here from Greenwich Village in the early '70s. North Beach is where I found everything I missed—the smell of bread being baked, coffee roasting, the sound of Italian being spoken in shops, coffee houses, food specialty shops and, above all, a multi-cultural mix. While I didn't live on Telegraph Hill until last year, everyone assumed I did, since I was here every single day having coffee at the original Caffe Roma before going to work, shopping, and meeting people, many of whom are still here.

I received my MBA in marketing at Golden Gate University, worked for BofA, and later as a marketing consultant. I've spent many years studying painting, Italian, and traveling the world—but nothing is better than coming back home. My interest in THD is to help preserve the most beautiful and vibrant part of our City and make it an hospitable place for locals and tourists to enjoy.



NEW THD MEMBER SIENNA FERRIS

Hello! I'm THD's newest and youngest member, Sienna. I was born on December 20, 2022, to THD Treasurer Nick and Vinaya Ferris and live on Telegraph Hill, just a block away from where my father was raised. I love sleeping during the day, gulping formula, standing on my feet (with support), and my absolute favorite hobby is waking my parents up at 4 or 5 a.m., depending on my mood. One day I hope to be President of THD, but in the meantime, you can see me at THD's happy hours, which are on the third Thursday of every month. I hope to meet you all soon!

THD ANNUAL SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Photos © Dennis Hearne





SOCIAL & PROGRAMS REPORT

by Kristen Foley, Committee Chair
kristen.foley@thd.org

On April 11, members reunited for the Annual Spring Members' Meeting. Quentin and Eddy Navia, purveyors of restaurant Pena Pachamama, located at 1630 Powell Street, provided delicious Bolivian cuisine, entertainment, and stories of the building's illustrious history.

Pena Pachamama was recently awarded certification as a San Francisco Legacy Business, recognizing the establishment as a valuable cultural asset with a long history of service to the community. Eddy Navia, a two-time Latin Grammy nominee and his wife Quentin toured the world sharing Bolivian-inspired compositions before emerging as restaurant owners.

The husband-and-wife team started out renting the space (then Amelio's, an historic speakeasy) in the heart of North Beach for a weekend concert. By the weekend's end, they had taken over the lease in what would become a world music restaurant, now celebrating its 25th anniversary.

A captivating storyteller, Quentin shared significant events that happened at the location—Clark Gable falling in love with Carole Lombard and Joe DiMaggio enjoying his wedding dinner with Marilyn Monroe. He added that it was a frequent stop for the Kennedys. So, its colorful past was the perfect setting for a Telegraph Hill Dweller dinner!

Fifty people attended the sold-out event. As members enjoyed a delicious Bolivian dinner featuring salmon, Bolivian beef, and Pachamama's award winning kale chips, they were entertained with music by the Navias and the Pachamama Band. Halfway through, a flamenco dancer performed to the lively melodies, encouraging audience participation. (A few members were brave enough to join in.)

Following dinner, the meeting program began. Judy Irving provided context to the recent *San Francisco Chronicle* "Official Animal of San Francisco" vote, including a detailed daily countdown of the exciting

race that ultimately resulted in a win for the Telegraph Hill Parrots and a feature in the *Washington Post*!

On April 12, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution to designate the Wild Parrots as the mascot and official animal of San Francisco. In a future vote, that resolution will become an ordinance, and the wild parrots will become enshrined in city law and lore.

We then heard from Supervisor Aaron Peskin, who gave the group a detailed update on District 3. Supervisor Peskin praised North Beach for its booming economic contributions to the City, in comparison to other San Francisco neighborhoods.

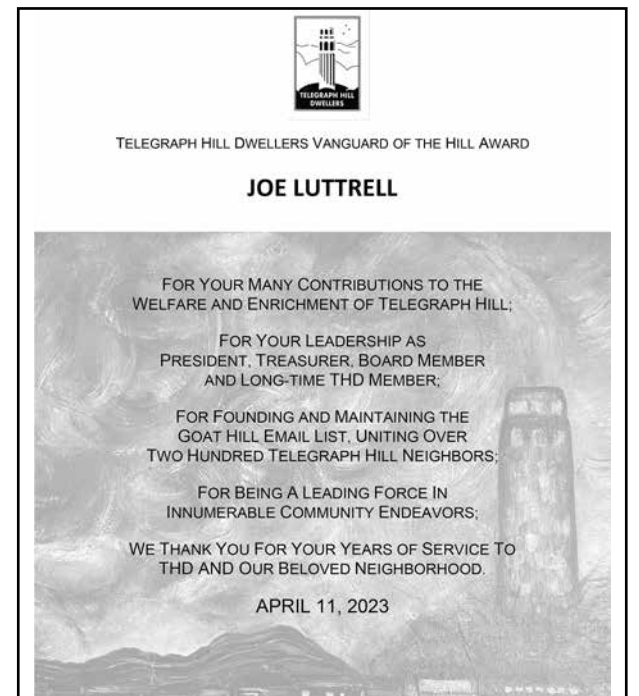
The 2023-2024 Telegraph Hill Dwellers' proposed slate of Officers and Directors, including new board members Fran Schreiber, Peter Stevens, and Greta Alexander, was presented and unanimously approved.

As his first order of business, President Stan Hayes graciously accepted his new position and presented two awards: He gave a heartfelt recognition to honor our outgoing president, Al Fontes, bestowing on him a certificate of appreciation for his unwavering support and direction during his term as president.



Stan next presented THD's annual "Vanguard of the Hill" award to Joe Luttrell. Joe, long-time THD member, served THD as president, treasurer, and

board member. He is a founder and keeper of the Goat Hill email list, uniting more than 200 neighbors on the east side of the Hill.



And with that the meeting concluded.

Thanks to all who attended. It was wonderful to visit with friends and meet new ones. A great time was had, and we can't wait for the next neighborhood event!

Upcoming Social Events

THD is looking forward to some fun events this summer. As the new Social Director, I am delighted to bring the neighborhood together for some group cheer. As a North Beach resident of 14 years and active member of the THD board for two, I'm hoping to connect neighbors and friends by expanding member events.

If we missed you at our April Members Meeting, keep a look out for email announcements regarding our upcoming THD Summer Family Picnic and Member Appreciation Party. We look forward to seeing you all there!





PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Stan Hayes, Nancy Shanahan, and Mary Lipian,
Committee Co-Chairs
PZ@thd.org

We thought you'd enjoy an update on some of the items the THD Planning & Zoning Committee has been following. As always, your support of THD's efforts is essential to our effectiveness. Thanks!

Preservation and Restoration of Historic Neon Signs

How many times have you enjoyed and admired those wonderful neon signs in North Beach? Some work; some don't. For those that don't, you've no doubt wished they could be restored, back to their previous glory. But, there's a hitch. Because neon signs can't be restored without removing the sign, then reinstalling it, existing Planning Code provisions now would require them to go through the daunting normal review and approval process for new signage. Thankfully, though, legislation is being drafted to provide for the restoration of historic neon signs in the North Beach and Broadway Neighborhood Commercial Districts, as well as in the special business districts of Chinatown. The proposed legislation would exempt neon signs from these requirements. We wish that legislation a smooth passage.

In case you're interested in refreshing your neon nostalgia, we've attached a map showing the locations of 22 neon lights in North Beach along with some notable examples. The map, a copy of which can be obtained for a nominal \$3 fee at neonspeaks.org/tours/, is courtesy of San Francisco Neon (sfneon.org/about/), which advocates for preserving historic neon signs with tours, talks, exhibits, consultations, and events that include Neon Speaks (neonspeaks.org/about/), an annual international festival and symposium celebrating neon design and the preservation of signs as community landmarks and identity.



Work begins on Tony Nik's sign.

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Examples of neon signs in North Beach.

COURTESY OF SFNEON.ORG

NEON FOREVER!



Proposal for restoration of Tony Nik's neon sign.

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Proposed Ordinance Excluding Historic Districts from HOME-SF

Supervisor Aaron Peskin's proposed ordinance that would exclude any site in an Article 10 historic district from the HOME-SF program was reviewed by both the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Planning Commission (PC). Planning staff recommended a modification that would have the exclusion apply not to the overall historic district but only to buildings contributory to the historic district or listed on an historic register.

THD strongly supported the ordinance as originally written, concerned that Planning staff's proposed modification could severely dilute its effectiveness. THD argued that the HOME-SF exclusion should apply not just to a limited set of individual historic buildings but to the entire historic district itself. THD further argued that the cumulative effect of this ordinance on the HOME-SF program citywide would be minimal because the 14 Article 10 historic districts, taken together, are less than 1% of the land area of San Francisco.

THD submitted a letter and provided comments at the HPC hearing on February 15 supporting the proposed ordinance as originally written and opposing staff's modification. Consistent with THD comments, the HPC voted 4-2 to recommend the ordinance, rejecting staff's proposed modification. THD submitted a similar letter and comments at the PC hearing on February 16. Consistent with THD comments, the PC voted 4-3 to recommend the ordinance as written, rejecting staff's proposed modification.

The ordinance has been referred to the Board of Supervisors' Land Use and Transportation Committee for a hearing and then will be referred to the full Board for consideration.

1526 Powell Street (Delucchi Sheet Metal Works)

The P&Z Committee reviewed this proposed project in September 2022, providing detailed comments on its impact to the historic building, its excessive height, and other design issues. As of this date, it appears that no formal project application has been filed. As presented to the Committee, the project sponsors proposed to use the State Density Bonus to partially demolish this recognized historic resource and construct a vertical and horizontal six-story addition reaching approximately 70 feet in height fronting Powell Street (in a 40 ft height district), comprising 20

residential units.

535 Green Street (Buon Gusto Building)

THD has been actively opposing this State Density Bonus project since it was first proposed more than five years ago and, through a grant from SF Heritage, sponsored the successful listing of this building on the National Register of Historic Places. As of this date, the environmental review is on hold. Nearly enveloping and gutting the Buon Gusto Building, this project would consist of 34 residential units in a building that would rise as high as 79 feet, nearly double the 40-foot height limit in this block of Green Street and nearly everywhere else in North Beach.

955 Sansome (Northeast Waterfront Historic District)

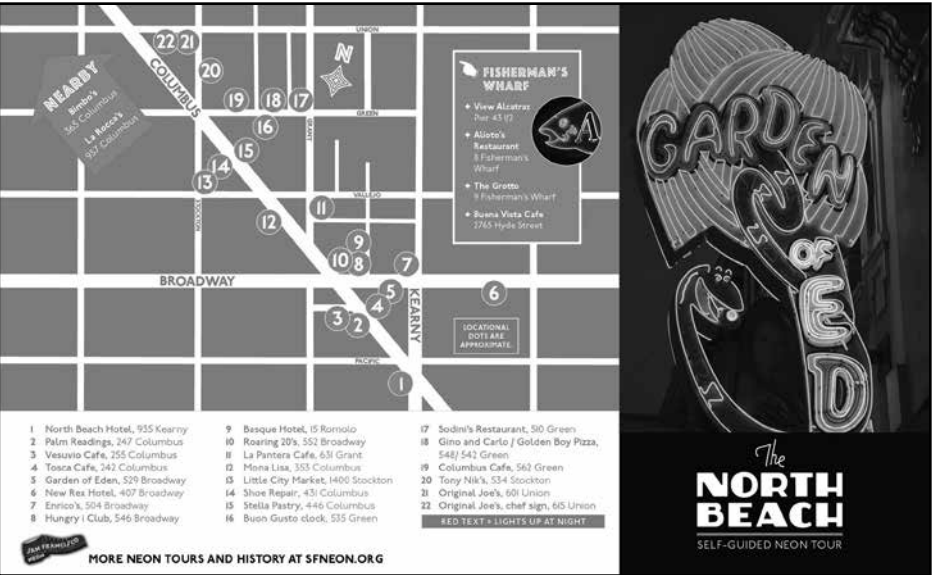
Along with the Waterfront Action Committee and many others, THD strongly opposes this HOME-SF project located in the Northeast Waterfront Historic District. Despite public comments and guidance from the Architectural Review Committee of the City's Historic Preservation Commission to reduce the size of this project, the developer has refused to do so.

It now appears that the project sponsor might have abandoned use of the HOME-SF program. Although a revised proposal could well be submitted, according to the Planning Department, no new project application has been filed as of this date. Rising nearly 120 feet above Sansome Street, the building would be multiple stories taller than any other building in the historic district, nearly three times taller than the average building in the historic district along Sansome Street, and three times taller than the 40-foot height limit of the California Register-eligible historic neighborhood uphill along Vallejo Street in the same block.

659 Union Street (Verde Apartment Building)

Supervisor Peskin has been working with the developer and City Attorney on special legislation to allow this project to proceed with an exception for this site only to allow a rooftop restaurant subject to conditions requiring the preservation of the existing exterior brick and architectural details and that the developer's proposed horizontal addition is compatible with the historic building, together with other conditions proposed by THD in its review of this proposal.

To join, or to get information from, the THD Planning & Zoning Committee, just send an email to PZ@thd.org.



Map of neon lights in North Beach.

COURTESY OF SFNEON.ORG

THE LIFER HILLDWELLER: GUANAJUATO, MEXICO

The *Semaphore* is excited to introduce a new column, “The Lifer Hilldweller,” with this issue. The column will follow the adventures of our ardent Hilldweller of 15 years, Romalyn Schmaltz, as she contemplates her time on the Hill from other vistas.

Romalyn served four years as THD’s chair of the Art and Culture Committee and two years as Vice President. She has been a regular contributor to the *Semaphore* since 2015.

by Romalyn Schmaltz

I am always drawn back to the places where I have lived, the houses and their neighborhoods.
—Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*

I write this staring at the glare ice that winter critters slide down on the shy path from my sidewalk to the river—the mightiest of Mississippi, the artery of this America—that is my backyard in Northeast Minneapolis. I can see it from here, not unlike I could see the San Francisco Bay from the Skycabin, my home for more than 15 years on the Greenwich Steps of Telegraph Hill whose steep staircase winds like a rivulet toward the roar of the Embarcadero. So my water life goes on, but this slope toward the bank is the only hill in sight, and it’s hardly a hill. It’s just a conduit to a conduit.

Such is life on the Great Plains. Even though I grew up in the Flyovers, the states Californians love to lump together are extremely biodiverse: The Black Hills of South Dakota are nothing like eastern Minnesota, most notably for the former’s bookending of the Continental Divide. It’s an arid, climatically unpredictable labyrinth of foothills spooned to the west by the Rocky Mountains, with millions of little prairie houses to the east. Were it not for distances and our round planet, you could see all the way east at least to Ohio. But I’m a thoroughgoing hill girl.

There is a Merlin in this hill story. My Greenwich Steps neighbor, artist, and filmmaker Howard Munson was the first to welcome me to our east-facing bluff in June of 2006. As I unpacked boxes from my Portland life on my porch, he regaled me with stories of our hillside, from who’s who and where they lived to the history of the gardens. (Valetta Heslet, who began the Greenwich Steps gardens and organized our “compound” into a series of artists’ shanties, was from my home state of South Dakota, as was her mother, Grace Marchant, who cultivated the far-denser Filbert Steps Gardens one block to the south.) He whispered innocent gossip about folks I wouldn’t even meet for years to come. And then, for whatever reason, he told me about another magical hill land from which he’d just returned: San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

Howard would intermittently bring up San Miguel over the ensuing 15-odd years as the place he could see me landing, extolling its artists’ communities, expat *joie de vivre*, warm and arid climate, and quality of life. While I listened like a kid hearing fairy tales of exotic, psychedelic vistas, it never really occurred to me to take Mexico seriously until my landlord celeritously asked me to leave the Skycabin in the spring of 2021. I dragged myself to the porch and cast a glance of longing and mourning and devastation out across my technicolor 180° view of the Bay just as Howard was ambling up the path to my house from Sansome Street.



Guanajuato City, my Midwest Mexican Mediterranean. It made Telegraph Hill look like a bunny slope in the alps, especially from a pedestrian’s perspective—and pretty much everyone in town is a pedestrian. © ISAI

He saw the tears in my eyes, stopped, and took in my news. Then he reminded me about San Miguel.

Within 24 hours I’d booked an apartment for four months beginning when the rainy season ended in 2021, and I landed in Mexico on their real day of Independence, September 15, muttering the words, “What the hell did I just do?” when I set down my bags and ukulele. Straightaway, I climbed the spiral staircase to my rooftop casita and spun around: 360° of hills far higher and sharper than the Black Hills, all terraced in terra-cotta hues dancing in the distance like thick swabs of paint drying drowsily in the desert breeze. It felt like capital-H Home.

Howard had this charming mantra he’d often repeat over my ensuing final three months on the hill: “You’ll be running that town in a month!” he would chide from the sidewalk as I kept packing my whole



El Pipilo beginning the ignition of the revolution. Guanajuato’s city citadel. © ROMALYN SCHMALTZ

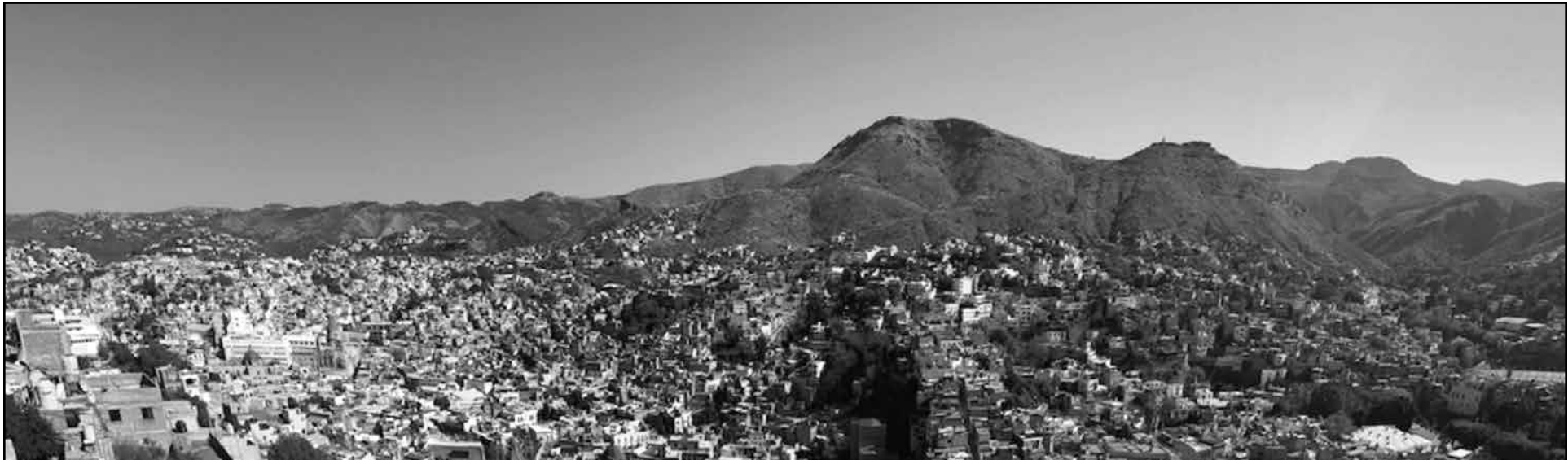
life into long-distance moving boxes strewn once again about my porch, eyes on a prize very much still in disguise. And while his hyperbole was hilarious, I did meet a lot of people who—while of sometimes questionable character themselves—introduced me to the people I feel I’m supposed to know after three extended stays in Mexico, including some of Howard’s artist friends I simply met through the organic creative channels central Mexico is teeming with. Again, Howard has always been my Merlin, indicating a path to the magic without being a helicopter neighbor.

(Here I am reminded of yet another *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* quote: *I don’t want to own anything until I find a place where me and things go together.*)

When I shared my news with fellow Hilldweller and District 3 Supervisor Aaron Peskin, he had exactly one word for me, and he incanted it like Ben’s dad’s friend in *The Graduate* intones “Plastics” in the graduation party scene. “Guanajuato,” he said emphatically. “Guanajuato.” And like Ben, I didn’t know what he meant. Fast-forward to this January, when I returned to San Miguel and, for the first time, it felt really small. Like smaller-than-my-Black-Hills-hometown small. It had become North-Beach intimate to me, which I rather liked. But soon after arriving, I found myself in the city of Guanajuato an hour to the west, and everything changed.

As I said immediately upon alighting on a stranger’s stoop downtown, this town makes San Francisco look like Minneapolis and San Miguel like a perennially sunny snow globe. Panoramic mountains—the Sierra de Guanajuato—envelop it like a fierce wolf-mama with a thousand breasts. To a hill person, it is at once sublime and comforting to be so deeply nested in a city’s topography and also to be overdosing on such a cornucopia of the senses. (The University of Guanajuato is in the city center and is a national Mecca for youth and especially artists, who hold a month-long art and culture city-wide festival for the whole month of October called ‘Cervantino,’ after its local hero, Cervantes.) The hills are trenchantly terraced, as in San Miguel, but at German-Expressionist, vertigo-inducing angles. The sky feels more like a cerulean lid with tightly fitted shark-tooth edges. And the kaleidoscopic staccato of the pueblos’ colors transcend terra cottas into candy reds and turquoises, Greek whites and blues, and all manner of rainbow relatives that, taken from a distance, harmonize into pointillistic perfection.

For this reason, I call it the ‘Mediterranean of Midwest Mexico.’ I spent well over half my 11 weeks there in this third iteration of my Mexican life, walking around eight miles up and down the hills each day with an artist called ‘Isai’—a living statue, no less, who worked the city center—from the Mexico City environs, who’d been performing in Guanajuato for 12 years. He quickly became a favorite friend and tireless guide whose deep knowledge of the city’s history combined with the street-wise expertise of a local artist became one of the most engrossing travel experiences of my life. Yet, although I was constantly packing and unpacking until I could not get the *WKRP in Cincinnati* theme song out of my head much of the time, I couldn’t help but feel at home in this new, big city, and besides my indefatigable host, I can only blame it on the hills. I return to them innately, as if drawn. If you’re a Hilldweller, too, I’d put it on my short list and run to the hills. ♦



Guanajuato from the Mexican Sierras’ foothills. © ROMALYN SCHMALTZ

GREENWICH STREET – YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

by David Lipkin
david.lipkin@thd.org

If you are a regular reader of *The Semaphore*, then you're in love. You might be in love with San Francisco. You might be in love with North Beach. You might be in love with Telegraph Hill. Or all of the above. But are you in love with a street?

For me, the answer is “yes,” and the paramour is Greenwich Street. Not all of Greenwich, mind you. Just the portion that heads east from Columbus Avenue and terminates at the Pimentell Garden above Grant Avenue.

My wife Petrita knows all about this. But she is not the jealous type and loves Greenwich as well. And we are both very protective of our street. If we hear you calling it “Green-which,” you might as well be calling it “Frisco.” Say “Grennich,” please!

But, you might ask, don't we also like the Greenwich Steps on the other side of Pioneer Park? Well, yes, of course, but the glories of the east side of Telegraph Hill have been well documented by so many others. So let's give the west side its due today.

We moved to Greenwich Street, to the north side of the 500 block (between Stockton Street and Grant Avenue), in March 2010. Was it luck or fate that led us to one of the sunniest blocks in all of San Francisco, with views galore? At first, we thought it was just dumb luck. The early part of our lives together (from 1981-91) involved countless visits to North Beach—we met in the Transamerica Pyramid and frequented Basta Pasta, Fior d'Italia, Savoy Tivoli, Little Joe's, U.S. Restaurant, and Caffè Greco, among others. So, the opportunity to return to and actually live in the neighborhood seemed merely a dream come true.

But then we started to ponder the fate side of the equation. In August 1978, during my first visit to San Francisco, I had purchased a book of postcards entitled *Thirty-Two Picture Postcards of Old San Francisco*, edited by the Wells Fargo Bank History Room. I never mailed any of them—they were too pretty. And somehow, through many moves over the years, the book never was lost or discarded. So, 32 years after my first visit to the City, we gave the postcard book a prominent place on our new coffee table on Greenwich.

Then one day in mid-2010, I picked up the book, and what did I notice on the cover? It was a photo of one of the postcards, featuring the 500 block of Greenwich Street! It showed the less-than-well-known funicular cable car line built by Frederick O. Layman that scaled the street briefly in the mid-1880s, taking residents and visitors to his then-famous “German Castle”



Layman's Castle.

COURTESY OPENSFHistory.ORG WNP37.03629

(which sat where the Coit Tower parking lot is located today). Soon to become better known as “Layman's Folly,” the castle fell into disrepair not long after the cable car line ceased to operate and was ultimately destroyed by fire in 1903, remaining vacant until the construction of nearby Coit Tower in 1933.

An intriguing coincidence, but was it “fate?” We certainly didn't call it that at the time. Then, a month or two later, we attended an art and wine festival down the Peninsula. We happened upon a large, colorful photo of Telegraph Hill, featuring Coit Tower at its apex. Directly below the tower in the photo: our building on Greenwich Street. Fate? Hardly. It was just another happy coincidence. So we snapped it up, giving it a special place in our hallway.

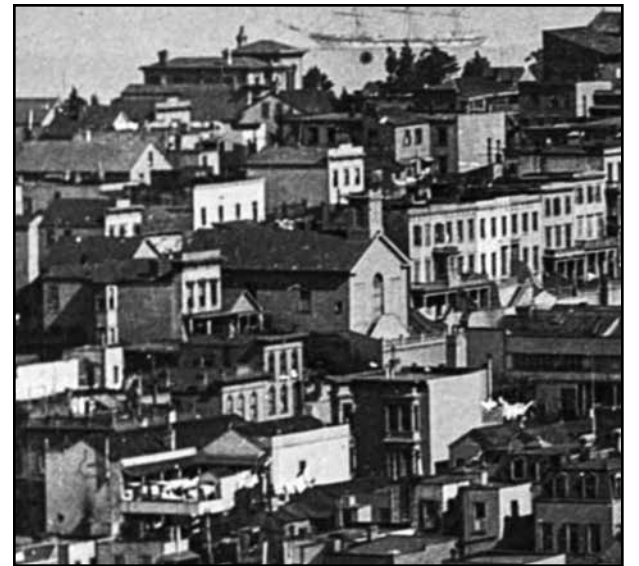
Finally, later in 2010, we were perusing a photo album from May 2009, when my father Daniel had visited San Francisco (from Philadelphia) for the very last time. He had passed away just a month later after attending his 60th college reunion at Princeton. Our last ever photo with him was at the Amtrak station in Emeryville, as we put him on the train back East. We were sad, but also happy, to flip through the images.

In this album, we came upon a photo I had taken at the corner of Greenwich and Leavenworth Streets, on Russian Hill. I recalled telling my Dad to face west toward me, so I could also get Coit Tower in the photo. Suddenly I realized that the photo also included the Greenwich Street building that we had found and moved into—almost one year later! Finally, fate had carried the day. While sad that my father would never visit us there, we were happy to realize what a cosmic role he had played in our return to the City.

Although this is my first article written for *The Semaphore*, having served as Photo Editor since 2018, I am always on the lookout for new and interesting images and facts about Telegraph Hill and North Beach. So what other interesting things have I learned about

Greenwich Street?

I always wondered why the front doors of so many buildings on the north side of the 500 block (includ-



Church (center of image) on Greenwich Street that lasted until the Great Fire.

COURTESY OPENSFHistory.ORG

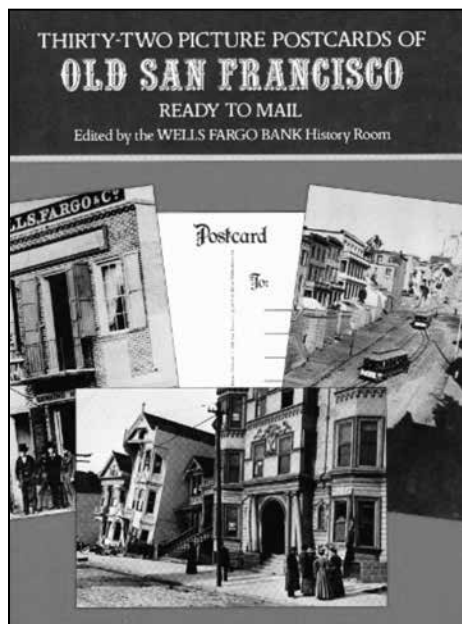
ing our building) were so high above the street. This phenomenon can be seen in the cable car photo from the 1880s, as well as in the recent photo that accompanies this article. I finally located the answer in *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill*, by David Myrick, an authoritative source of history for our neighborhood. It turns out that after homes were already built on this block, property owners on Dupont Street (Grant Avenue today) up the hill successfully sought in 1862 to lower the grade at the intersection with Greenwich, which then correspondingly lowered its height all the way down to Stockton Street. The result: lots of extra steps.

This change also impacted the use of the property. On the site of our building (where there are 40 steps just to get to the front door), there stood several churches, the first of which, Second Congregational Church, opened in 1853. Edith Street abutted the church in the rear and was then known as Church Place, giving way, first, to the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1862, itself succeeded in 1879 by St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

But after the grade of Greenwich Street was lowered, parishioners began to complain about the remoteness of the location. According to Myrick, one of them observed that “Men will not worship in a temple reached only by ladders or balloons.” As a result, each church in turn moved away to a more convenient location. Finally, the old church building burned to the ground in the great earthquake and fire of 1906. Our building was built just two years later, in 1908.

In the 115 years that our building has stood on Greenwich Street, has anyone interesting lived there? One of its residents, Curt Gentry, was a well-known author who, while residing there, penned *The Madams of San Francisco: An Irreverent History of the City by the Golden Gate* and *J. Edgar Hoover, the Man and the Secrets* (made into a film by Francis Ford Coppola), and, most famously, co-authored *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*.

So, what do you know about your street and your building in our neighborhood? Perhaps less than you should.



Picture postcards of Old San Francisco.

COURTESY WELLS FARGO BANK



Cable cars on Greenwich Street hill. COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE



North side of the 500 block of Greenwich Street.

© DAVID LIPKIN

CONQUERING SETBACKS, PETITE LIL'S LIGHTS UP LEGENDARY 'WASHBAG' SPACE

by Joe Bonadio
We welcome another review by Joe Bonadio (JoeContent.net) and reprint it with permission.
Petite Lil's
1859 Powell Street
San Francisco, CA 94133

Like all things, neighborhoods are subject to cycles. They wax and wane; businesses come and go, and within a matter of a few years, yesterday's sleepest corner can morph into today's hottest new destination.

As one of San Francisco's original settlements, North Beach has seen both sides of this equation over the decades. And as you may have heard, the neighborhood is in the midst of a big upswing right now: Over the last few months, better than half a dozen new bars and restaurants have opened in The Beach, with several more in the works. But in a field of promising newcomers, the biggest story might just belong to the man behind the long-awaited *Lillie Coit's*.

Mindful of its history, the new place takes its name from one of North Beach's most well-remembered citizens: a longtime champion and patron of the fire department, Lillie Coit was also the woman who gifted the neighborhood with Coit Tower. Just as notably, it occupies the former space of the most famous bar/restaurant in recent San Francisco history, the *Washington Square Bar & Grill*.

While the space looks terrific, owner Nick Floulis insists there is still work to do. So, while improvements continue apace, their spiffy new sign bears a sobriquet: *Petite Lil's*.

The project was originally conceived nearly five years ago, and if you think that seems like an awfully long time to build a restaurant, you're not wrong: From the beginning, the enterprise has been beset by delays, the first of them being the massive 2018 fire that gutted the building directly across the street at 659 Union.

That setback alone might have been enough to change the mind of another restaurateur, but Floulis wouldn't be so easily deterred. The former co-owner of

North Beach staple *Chubby Noodle*, Floulis was a veteran of the business, by reputation as scrappy as he was savvy. While he did decide to push back the projected opening date after the fire, Floulis was determined to go forward. He kept at it, and it wasn't long before he was hosting events in the space, still taking shape. Along with his then-partners, Floulis also put together *Doors Open*, a pop-up concept created to benefit the scores of workers who had been displaced by the tragic fire.

All the while, Floulis continued developing the property, working to realize his long-term vision for *Lillie Coit's* (or *Lillie's*, as some had already begun referring to the place). His dream would require more than a routine buildout, however. What Floulis had in mind was a complete reimagining of the space. The ancient bar on the south wall would be entirely removed, to be replaced by a 30-seat circular bar in the center of the room.

What's more, a sweeping mezzanine would overlook the bar below, construction that would eventually add fully 50 seats to the venue.

Along with a roster of other improvements, these changes would utterly transform the Powell Street space. When I toured the site with Floulis in December of 2019, the project was well on its way to completion—but as we would soon find out, the world had a few more curveballs in store for *Lillie Coit's*.

Of course, we all know what comes next. In March of the following year, Covid Hell froze over. Lockdowns began; in a dozen ways, all of our lives were forever changed. As one effect of the pandemic, brick-and-mortar businesses were in big trouble. And once the veil had descended, suddenly the idea of opening a new restaurant—and quite a big one, at that—seemed almost insane.

But despite the doubters, Floulis kept at it. And to be sure, by 2021, plenty of people were starting to doubt

Nick Floulis. Unfortunately, this included his landlord, and none too few of his investors. But Floulis wouldn't stop working, he wouldn't cave. He just kept building.

On August 23rd 2022, Floulis hosted his first big event at the fledgling *Lillie Coit's*. Billed as the Bar Break-In, the party was no less than a complete blow-out, with well over 500 people (!) showing up over the course of the night. Keep in mind this was an event promoted with an 8.5 x 11" picture frame next to the coconuts at Floulis' tiny *Hole in The Wall Coffee* around the corner, held at a venue that wasn't even open yet. It

was an auspicious start: Right out of the gate, it seemed San Francisco had an appetite for *Lillie Coit's*. The event was no fluke, as a number of subsequent events have clearly borne out.

After six weeks dedicated to holiday popup *Natale*, a lavishly lit paean to all things Christmastime, in January 2023 *Petite Lil's* threw open its doors with a streamlined design and a brand new brasserie-influenced menu. If you haven't seen this space yet, you owe yourself a visit.

Don't expect to see any traces of the old *Washbag*, because the interior has been gutted and redesigned from floor to ceiling. While a work in progress, the venue's decor is striking, featuring a wide collection of large-format vintage posters, many well over a hundred years old. A knowing nod to Europe's storied *Belle Epoque*, the atmosphere harkens back to a more glamorous time—one that would have been familiar to Lillie Coit herself. Suffice to say, the place has never looked better.

When I spoke with Floulis this week, the restaurateur seemed galvanized by this new stage of his project. "It's great to watch the neighborhood slowly discovering us," he told me. "We've still got plenty of work to do, but we've gotten off to a festive start."

Petite Lil's is now open from 11:00 AM-1:00 AM every Thursday through Sunday. Includes food. ✂



Perhaps my favorite item on the menu so far: The French Onion Soup at *Petite Lil's* is nonpareil.

© JOE BONADIO



42 BEST RESTAURANTS IN
SAN FRANCISCO RIGHT NOW
-TimeOut SF

HOTTEST NEW RESTAURANTS
SAN FRANCISCO DECEMBER 2022
-EATER SF

Destination Outer Richmond restaurant Cassava relocates to its new North Beach home on October 12.

Cassava Opens With
Equitable Wages and
Affordable Prix Fixe in
a Vibrant New North
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401 COLUMBUS AVE
@ VALLEJO ST
www.cassavasf.com





TRANSPORTATION REPORT

by Howard Wong, AIA, Committee Chair
howard.wong@thd.org

TRANSITION IN SAN FRANCISCO'S SOCIAL AND TRANSIT HISTORY

Let's be frank. Essentially, commute travel patterns have changed forever—as work-at-home, smaller office footprints, operational efficiencies, new technologies, and online shopping are institutionalized. And immeasurable are the benefits of social freedom and quality of life enhancements, even before the rise of the four-day work week. Near 30% of San Francisco's job openings are now offering hybrid or fully remote work, once again leading the nation in social innovation. Therein lies our opportunity to shape global economic, cultural, and transportation norms—as the City has done many times before.

FROM CENTRALIZED DOWNTOWNS TO NEIGHBORHOOD HUBS

More than a jobs and retail center, San Francisco's downtown has the fine-grained cultural and historical fabric that can mesh into unique neighborhood hubs, energized by regional and intercity transit. Fueled by intricate mixed-uses, housing, beautiful streetscapes, and awesome scale, downtown can evolve—not just recover.

Historic landmarks, iconic architecture, and activity centers are focal points around which to design distinctive neighborhoods. By example, Melbourne (Australia) revitalized its downtown with small laneways, walkable public realms, cafes, nightlife, public art, and residential incentives—incubating cultural diversity, excitement, safety, surprises, and vitality around-the-clock.

PUBLIC TRANSIT CAN REINFORCE NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

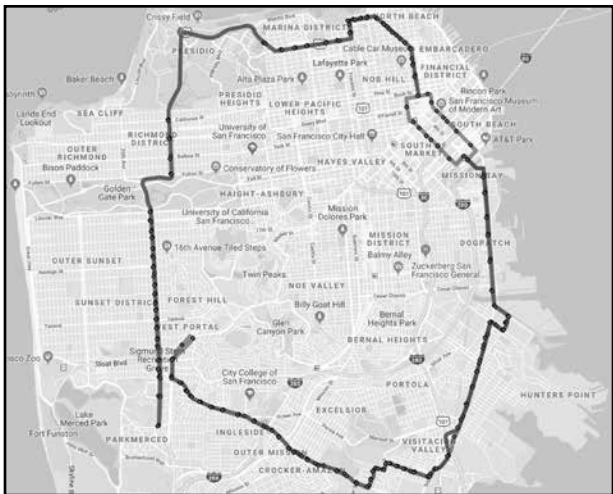
More and more people will be working at home and activating their own neighborhoods throughout the day. Public transit can bond neighborhoods with bus loop routes that connect community nodes, like shopping streets, supermarkets, schools, libraries, churches, parks, playgrounds, and cultural venues. Regionally, rather than using hub and spoke routes to downtown, larger transit loops can connect multiple neighborhoods.

Again, Melbourne has a free downtown tram zone. Houston (Texas) has a free downtown bus loop, and Baltimore (Maryland) has four free circulator bus routes in the central business district. Even San Francisco has existing free shuttles, like the Presidio Go, Golden Gate Park loop, SF State-BART bus, Mission Bay shuttle, and Kaiser/SF General/UCSF loops.

MUNI'S EXISTING CIRCLE BUS ROUTE

At night, Muni's #91 Owl bus (3rd -19th Ave) is a citywide circle route that connects the Marina, Fisherman's Wharf, North Beach, Chinatown,

A TRANSIT TIPPING POINT



Muni route map showing the route of the #91 Owl Bus (3rd-19 Ave). The night bus loops around San Francisco, covering many districts, neighborhoods and streets. It is Muni's longest route 24 miles long.

COURTESY CURBEDSF

Financial District, Downtown/Civic Center, Soma, Potrero Hill, Bayview/Hunters Point, Excelsior, Sunset, Golden Gate Park, Richmond, and Presidio. Although intended as minimal service to cover much of San Francisco at night, the route is a powerful unifier of neighborhoods. If the #91 bus were to operate 24/7 at high frequency (or a variation of such a circle route), transit riders could well reach more destinations directly without transfers, allowing better marshalling of Muni's resources and alignments.

GOOD TRANSIT PLANNING IS ALMOST AS IMPORTANT AS FUNDING

As pandemic federal relief funds are exhausted, transit agencies face steep fiscal cliffs. Even prior to the pandemic, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) was studying new funding strategies, including regional ballot measures, local bond measures, dedicated taxes, downtown congestion pricing, fare/fee increases, expansion of meter hours/coverage, residential parking permit zones, and property development. Service cuts, deferring maintenance, layoffs, and route eliminations and realignments are possible, exacerbated by cost overruns and operating costs of the Central Subway.

While San Francisco faces a \$728 million city budget deficit, SFMTA and other agencies are lobbying the State for transit dollars.

But California cut transportation funds from its budget, citing its own \$22 billion deficit. And the State is asking the Federal government for more transit relief. To build public confidence, SFMTA and transit agencies need to reimagine budgets and transit planning—to provide the most service, to benefit the most people, at the lowest costs and in the shortest timeframes.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IS A BIG PART OF THE SOLUTION

A silver lining in the transit fiscal crisis is the acceleration of regional transit coordination, moving toward future regional transit integration. Unlike the Bay Area's 27 transit agencies, many metropolises around the world have single regional governance structures. With existential fiscal threats, the urgency is clear as the Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission coordinates nine-county task forces, committees, public outreach, studies, pilot projects, and funding, which aim to simplify mobility throughout the Bay Area.

A major step is the establishment of a Regional Transit Manager, whose office will envision Bay Area transit as a single system. The potential operational benefits, cost-savings, and revenue gains are enormous, by coordinating transfers, fare policy, ticketing, schedules, wayfinding, customer experience, and equity. One pioneering pilot project is the Clipper BayPass, which will provide 50,000 Bay Area residents free access to all bus, rail, and ferry services in the region and measure the impact of an all-system pass. An integrated regional system will grow transit ridership, better addressing overall economic, environmental, and equity goals.



All Melbourne trams are free in the Central Business District and Docklands, connecting to Marvel Stadium, train stations, marketplaces, parliament, cathedral, restaurants, shopping districts and harbor.

© HOWARD WONG



ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Nanci Gaglio
nanci.gaglio@thd.org

Art is Life.
Life is Art.

Community breeds Culture.
Culture breeds Community.

I've been thinking about what draws so many visitors to our neighborhood as opposed to others in San Francisco, and, simply, it's what we offer in culture, entertainment, history, food, music, and beauty.

It's also us, the inhabitants. We create this culture simply by stepping out and participating—whether it's sitting at Trieste or Greco with a notebook in hand or chatting it up with neighbors. Or it's belling up to a favorite bar, listening to live music, spending time enjoying fine art in our galleries, lobbying to keep

WHAT'S YOUR JAM?

box stores, chains, and predatory developers out. See? It's how we participate in the community that keeps it thriving. Even if it's simply sitting in Washington Square Park watching the dogs play.

So, what's your jam?

As for me, it's film. And as THD's Art and Culture chair, I want to develop further a film community that already exists. For me, it's about the exhibition of film.

So, while movie theaters close around the country and the likes of Netflix, HBO, Peacock, Hulu, et al become the only way we're able to ingest cinema, I've joined forces with a few other radical film enthusiasts to create:

The North Beach Cinema Club presents "Films with Friends."

The club and program name might change, but for now, this is what we're calling ourselves, and we seek more members. So please reach out if you want to join

and help curate, market, and get involved in a myriad of ways. Here's our confirmed film line up for the first Third Wednesdays' Films with Friends, beginning Wednesday, June 21.

Savoy Tivoli: Head Trip (The Doggie Diner Documentary)

Vesuvio Alley: Short Films by local filmmakers

Pellegrini Piazza: Felix the Cat cartoons (family programming)

Church Key Bar: Found Footage with a live DJ spinning

Hawaii West Bar: Night of the Living Dead film

FalloutSF: TBD

Keep an eye out for a monthly poster. And please reach out, especially if film is your jam. Let's bring cinema back with friends in a community space. There's no better place than here on Telegraph Hill.



THE BEAT MUSEUM HAS NOW ENTERED ITS 20TH YEAR

WILL WE MAKE IT TO 21?

by Jerry Cimino

On March 12th—which would have been Jack Kerouac’s 101st birthday—The Beat Museum celebrated our 20th anniversary. At a full-house event, attended by supporters from all over the Bay Area and as far away as Germany, my wife, Estelle, and I took the audience through our exhilarating history.

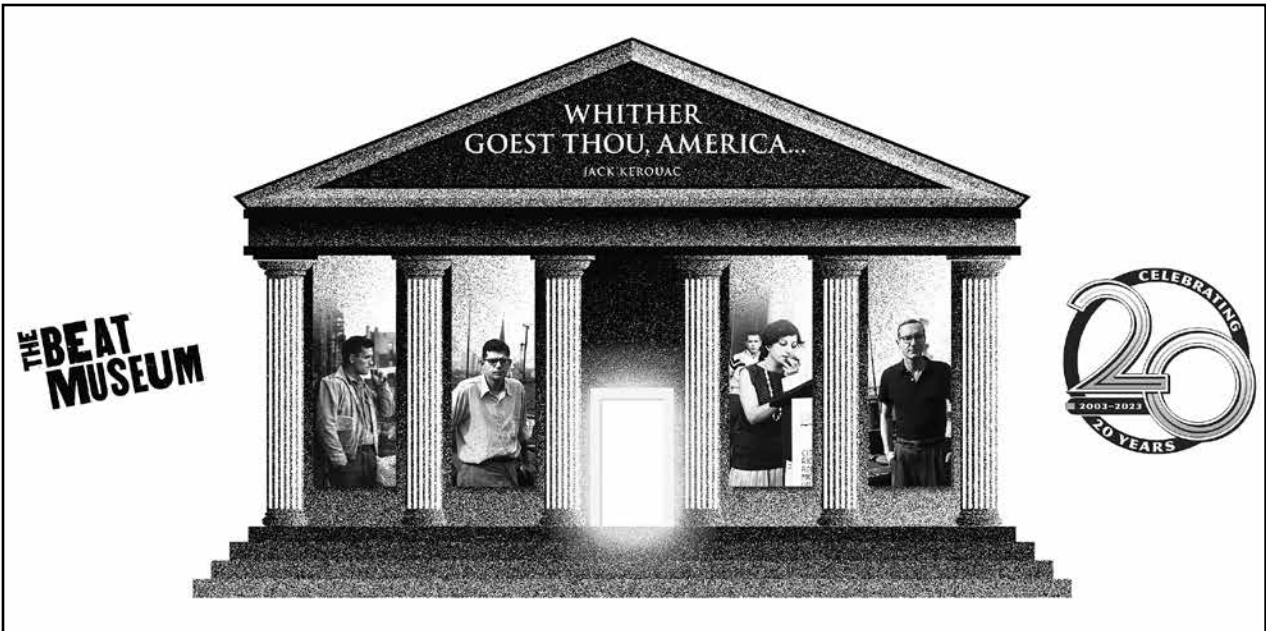
In March of 2003, we launched The Beat Museum in Monterey, California. Our local newspaper covered the opening, and the very next day, a man walked in and handed us a copy of a record: Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Kenneth Rexroth: Poetry Readings in the Cellar. I was familiar with the LP and knew it was valuable. I told the guy we had just opened, and I didn’t have the cash to purchase it from him. He looked me in the eye and said, “I don’t want you to buy it. I’m giving it to you. You need to put this on the wall so people can see how important this era is to history.”

At that moment I realized we were onto something.

A meeting at the Steinbeck Center in Salinas in 2005 gave us insight as to how we could take our little storefront operation to the next level. For a while, Kim Greer and I were having lunch every other week. One day, out of the blue, Kim said to me, “The Beat Museum should be huge. In fact, one day, it should be even bigger than the Steinbeck Center. Especially if you take it to San Francisco.”

“How do you figure?” I asked. Kim slowly looked around the restaurant, then leaned over the table and said in a low, conspiratorial tone, “Look, in Steinbeck, I’ve got one guy. Granted, he won both the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize in Literature, but The Beat Museum not only has the Beat poets and writers but the entire counterculture scene—the hippies and all of the 1960s, the free speech movement, Civil Rights, the rise of feminism, LGBT+ liberation, and the history of jazz and rock ‘n’ roll. It really should be huge.”

Later that same year, we brought the Beat Museum on Wheels to the North Beach Festival. The organiz-



Graphic by Brandon Loberg.

COURTESY OF BEAT MUSEUM

ers set us up on Stockton Street, right across from the Italian Athletic Club. North Beach locals came out to greet us.

In 2006, fresh off a second successful national tour with the Beat Museum on Wheels, we were ready to get established in San Francisco. Marsha Garland was instrumental in introducing us around. I met Kevin Brown, and we signed an agreement on a napkin that The Beat Museum would sublease his Live Worms Gallery on Grant Avenue for a few months to test the waters in North Beach.

We got lucky when Carl Nolte with the San Francisco Chronicle interviewed me and tied our opening day at Live Worms with the arrival of Jack Kerouac’s original On the Road scroll at the SF Public Library that very same day. Because of Nolte’s article, we were interviewed by both the Associated Press and UPI and, that weekend, found ourselves in 300 newspapers around the world—all on just our opening weekend!

Soon, we made our way to our current location on Broadway. This is the building where the world

has gotten to know us well over the last 17 years. This is where we’ve met thousands of Beat followers and aficionados, as well as student groups averaging 1-2 classes a week. We’ve met many celebrities and fellow travelers, including Patti Smith, Jimmy Page, Van Morrison, Owen Wilson, and Kristen Stewart, along with tens of thousands of everyday Beat Generation enthusiasts, many of whom flock to San Francisco just to walk the same streets as Kerouac and Ginsberg and take in the Beat experience.

In 2021, our 15-year lease expired in the middle of the pandemic. Since then, we’ve been month-to-month. Soon we will need to move out due to a mandatory seismic retrofit of the building. Once we move out, we’re uncertain whether we’ll be able to move back in once the construction is complete. We’re also uncertain whether we will be able to remain in North Beach.

This is why these last few years we’ve been speaking to people about the possibility of a new and permanent home for The Beat Museum. A little more than a year ago, *The Semaphore* carried an article about this very topic and one of the possibilities for a new home—the Buon Gusto building on Green Street.

In the early days of the Beat Museum in North Beach, Will Hearst and I were having a drink at a local bar when he said something no one had ever said to me before: “The Beat Museum should outlive you. Fifty, one hundred years from now, there should still be a Beat Museum in North Beach.”

Given our history, we’re used to living with uncertainty. We’re also somewhat familiar with miracles coming our way just at the moment we really need them to arrive.

Oftentimes, it’s just the right person who can help in just the right way, at exactly the moment we need them.

There are many creative ways we can maintain our longevity in San Francisco. Sometimes people actually donate buildings to nonprofits! This happened for Museo Italo Americano on Battery Street just a few years ago. Or, maybe someone could loan us a commercial space for a while. Maybe the City could lease us a space for a dollar a year like it’s done with other culturally important San Francisco nonprofits.


We want to stay in San Francisco. We want to stay in North Beach. And we’re still looking for outside help to do just that.

Jerry Cimino
The Beat Museum
540 Broadway (at Columbus)
San Francisco, CA 94133
1-800-KER-OUAC
<http://www.kerouac.com>

The Beat Museum on Wheels Brochure:
<https://www.kerouac.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/beat-museum-on-wheels-2022-brochure-web.pdf>



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WHAT IS THE RENT BOARD HOUSING INVENTORY?

by Theresa Flandrich
theresa.flandrich@thd.org

Thank you to Theresa Flandrich for starting us off on a new feature on Housing, a concern of readers, both owners and tenants. She is co-founder of the North Beach Tenants Committee and a member of the THD board.

A new law passed by the City and County of San Francisco, Ordinance No 265-20, establishes a recording of all existing housing in San Francisco today. The law requires all property owners to provide certain information about their residential properties to the Rent Board each year. The reporting requirements apply to all residential units in San Francisco, including single-family homes, vacant units, and owner-occupied units.

The Impact

The law created a new licensing requirement for San Francisco landlords. Property owners who report that a unit is tenant-occupied will receive a rent increase “license,” allowing them to impose annual allowable and banked rent increases. Landlords who do not fulfill their reporting requirements will not receive

a license, prohibiting them from imposing annual allowable and banked rent increases on a tenant until reporting is completed.

For the first time, we will have not only the Planning Department’s Housing Inventory, which focuses on the production of housing, but also an inventory of existing housing in real-time, which will better inform our policymakers.

As of March 1, 2023, all owners of residential properties were to file a report with the San Francisco Rent Board, updating the information each March 1 after that. Owners who have not received a notice about completing the Rent Board Housing Inventory should contact the Rent Board (see below) right away.

Resources

The following websites offer information about the Housing Inventory for both internet users and non-users.

For internet users: <https://sf.gov/information/rent-board-housing-inventory-frequently-asked-questions-faq> provides a comprehensive list of information you will be asked to provide about your home/building and how to use the website to report and file online, including a link to the portal filing.

For Non-internet users: To request paper reporting forms, contact the San Francisco Rent Board at 415-252-4600 or visit the office at 25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 320.

Tenants: To check the license status of your building, go to <https://portal.sfrb.org/FrontPortal/Page/RenderPage?tabId=20> or call the SF Rent Board at 415-252-4600.

For questions or assistance completing the Housing Inventory reporting forms, call the 311 Customer Service Center by dialing 3-1-1 or 415-701-2311 (from outside the 415 area code).

Office Hours and Counseling:

Phone counseling is available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at 415-252-4600.

The SF Rent Board office is open to the public for drop-in services Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., not including legal holidays.

Rent Board
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 320
San Francisco, CA 94102



FRIENDS OF WASHINGTON SQUARE

Meet on the 2nd Tuesday every month, with work parties in the Square every quarter. See website for times, dates, locations.

www.friendsofwashingtonsquare.com

VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS JANUARY —MARCH 2023

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

January 2023

THD welcomed its newest member, Sienna Ferris, the newborn daughter of Nick and Vinaya Ferris.
THD has been hosting “Thirsty Thursdays” on

the third Thursday of each month. January’s will be at the Savoy Tivoli on January 19th at 5:30 p.m.

The Board formed a Nominating Committee to select and propose a slate of Officers and Directors for 2023-2024. Those selected to serve on the five-member committee are Cap Caplan, Greg Giachino, Stan Hayes, Judi Powell, and Nancy Shanahan.

Kristen Foley agreed to serve as THD’s Social Chair for the remainder of 2022-2023 year.

Treasurer Nick Ferris reported that THD has a net positive income. It remains in a strong financial position due to reductions in forecasted expenses,

Vacant NB Rental?

THD member and longtime resident of Telegraph Hill has lost her rental home and belongings due to a fire. If anyone has or knows of a vacant rental unit in the neighborhood, please contact Maria/Mary at 415-710-6358, or email her at maria.bugarin7@gmail.com.

better than projected advertising revenue, and the generous bequest of \$10,000 left to THD by the Estate of Beatrice Taggi.

It was announced that THD members have been invited to join Gary Kamiya, who will be leading a Walking Tour of North Beach on January 28, followed by another one scheduled for February 18.

February 2023

THD has received an invitation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) to be a consulting party under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which requires all federal agencies proposing to fund any project that might impact historic properties to consult with interested parties and to seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on historic resources.

Here, COE is proposing to contribute federal funding to the Port’s proposal to alter the historic buildings in The Embarcadero National Register Historic District to address sea level rise. President Al Fontes asked Nancy Shanahan to serve as THD’s representative in the Section 106 process. Board members are encouraged to participate.

The Waterfront Committee announced that it will be meeting with representatives of Hudson Pacific Properties, the Port’s lessee of the Ferry Building, to review the proposed design changes and alterations to the Ferry Building, which are focused on increasing indoor and outdoor areas for restaurant use.

Gary Kamiya’s upcoming walking tour on February 18 will focus on the history of the Barbary Coast.

THD approved a resolution calling for a moratorium on the removal of any tree subject to the City’s jurisdiction not posing a threat or hazard to human safety. The resolution will also be scheduled for consideration by the Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods.

March 2023

The Nominating Committee presented its proposed slate to the Board in advance of the General Membership meeting at which all THD members will vote on the slate of Officers and Directors for 2023-2024.

Al Fontes adjourned the March 14, 2023 Board Meeting in memory of Kathleen Dooley on the one year anniversary of her passing.



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STANDING COMMITTEES

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Membership: Andy Katz THDmembership@gmail.com
Oral History Project Manager: John Doxey oralhistory@thd.org
Transportation: Howard Wong howard.wong@thd.org
Parks & Trees: Michael Rothmann michael.rothmann@thd.org
Planning & Zoning: Nancy Shanahan, Stan Hayes, and Mary Lipian PZ@thd.org
Semaphore: Cap Caplan (Editor) cap.caplan@thd.org
David Lipkin (Photo Editor) david.lipkin@thd.org
Social & Programs: Kristen Foley social@thd.org
Waterfront: Greg Chiampou waterfront@thd.org

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Art and Culture: Nanci Gaglio nanci.gaglio@thd.org
Neighborhood Engagement: Nick Ferris nick.ferris@thd.org

PLANNING & ZONING COMMITTEE MEETS last Thursdays
of each month. Call for time and location.
986-7070 or 563-3494 or 391-5652.

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Central Police District Community Advisory Board: Daryl Babbitt
Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods: Al Fontes
Friends of Washington Square: Michael Rothmann
Northeast Waterfront Advisory Group Member: Stan Hayes



by Nick Ferris
nick.ferris@thd.org

TREASURER'S REPORT

As many readers know, Telegraph Hills Dwellers' fiscal year ended on March 31. I am pleased to report that THD ended the 2022-2023 fiscal year with a net positive income of nearly \$14,000. This sum was largely due to the very generous contribution from the late Beatrice Taggi, a Telegraph Hill resident, that I reported on in the last issue.

We are indeed grateful and honored by Ms. Taggi's bequest, which will be put toward the betterment of

our community, as established in THD's bylaws:
"The object of this organization shall be to beautify and improve Telegraph Hill; to encourage a friendly association among the Hill residents; to protect the basic character, building scale, and open space of the Hill against increased density and traffic; to perpetuate the historical traditions of the Hill's place in San Francisco history; to insure Telegraph Hill's constructive participation in the development of our city; and to represent the property owners and residents in community problems which may arise."



TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Voice Mail: (415) 843-1011. Web Site: www.thd.org
P.O. Box 330159 • San Francisco, CA 94133

THD BOARD OFFICERS 2023-2024

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Vice President: Greg Ciachino
Recording Secretary: Mary Lipian
Corresponding Secretary: Katie Hopkins
Treasurer: Nick Ferris
Financial Secretary/Membership: Andy Katz
Historian: Nancy Shanahan
Past President: Al Fontes
Semaphore Editor: Cap Caplan

DIRECTORS

Term: 2022-2024

Theresa Flandrich
Nanci Gaglio
Michael Rothmann
Nadya Williams

Term: 2023-2025

Greta Alexander
Kristen Foley
Fran Schreiber
Peter Stevens



WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS!

There's no better way to be connected to your neighborhood and be a voice of the Hill than by joining Telegraph Hill Dwellers today.

Join at thd.org. If you'd prefer to have a brochure and sign-up form mailed to you, please send an email to membership@thd.org. Already a member? Give one as a gift!

Membership includes:

- A one-year subscription to news & events via email and a quarterly publication, *The Semaphore*.
- Opportunities to be active in your community. Your passion likely aligns to one of many committees.
- Social and Art & Culture events throughout the year—attend and contribute!

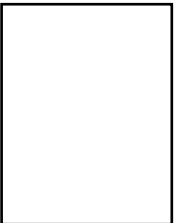
Annual Dues:

Individuals	\$35
Households	\$50
Seniors (65 and older)	\$25
Senior Households	\$40

Join now or give the gift of membership at THD.org or email membership@thd.org.



TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS
P.O. BOX 330159
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133

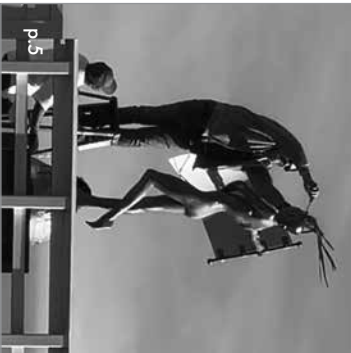


The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 241

Spring 2023



THE SEMAPHORE #241 Spring 2023

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Board of Directors and Committees

Become a Member

SEMAPHORE STAFF

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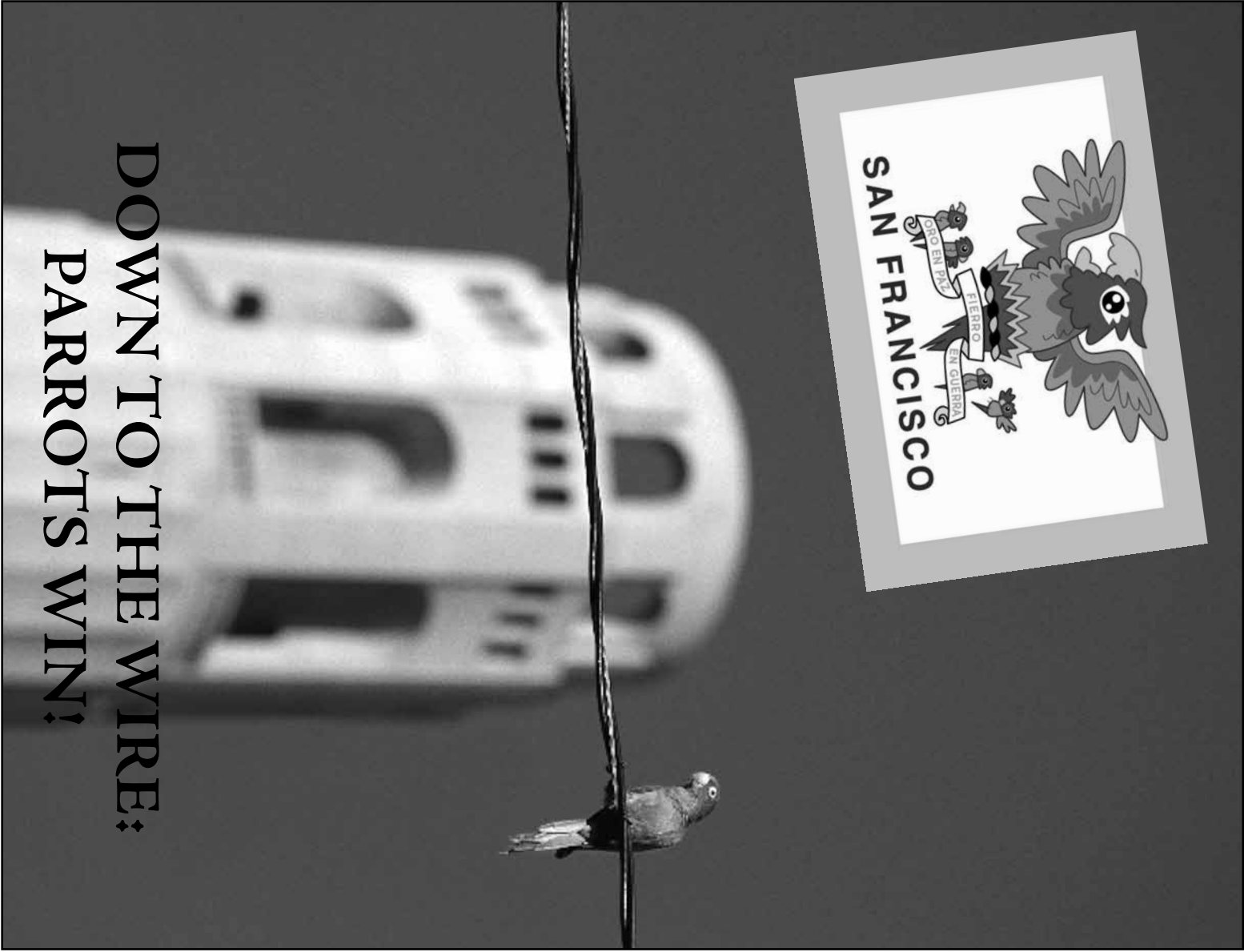
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DOWN TO THE WIRE: PARROTS WIN!